

THE STREET-CHILDREN OF KANPUR : AN INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

800181

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
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to the

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

DECEMBER, 1997

CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the work contained in the thesis entitled "The Street-Children of Kanpur : An Interactionist Perspective", by Shaifali Rastogi, has been carried out under my supervision and that this work has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.


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CHILDREN OF THE STREET

They abandoned me, now what will become of me ? What will be ?

How good it is to be prepared for the pitfalls of life

I am the future. Nothing will happen, nothing will change.

I am a child of the street

From the centers, from the corners.

The days pass and I am here, where everything is seen.

Where the Struggle for survival is constant. And for a piece of bread, they robbed my love. They robbed me and left me without affection. They left me marginalized for you. What fault have, I, a child, a kid with nothing in life. Do you understand ?

Delivered to a life of the streets, I, a being without love.

I cry for affection, for the maternal breast, I cry.

Even though they can criticize me why don't they do something to help us ? I need affection. I need closeness and guidance.

It is not my fault that I'm a street child, that I am an abandoned child.

Do you know what I want ? I only want the right to be a person, to be able to dream like everyone of having liberty.

Have you ever imagined the life of an abandoned child ? Without any help ? Abused by life ?

Meeting face to face with brute reality ? I don't want to be given up like a freak to life. Let me be a person, at least to be happy, to be a child, to believe in fairy tales, to believe that Santa Claus exists, to feel human warmth.

Let me live my childhood

Is it much to ask ?

Guara Rosa da Silva
BRAZIL

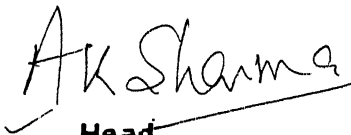
Courtesy : 'Let us Speak'

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Shaifali Rastogi has satisfactorily completed all the course requirements for the Ph.D. Programme in Sociology. The courses include:

| | |
|---------|---|
| SOC 720 | RESEARCH METHODS |
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| SOC 722 | APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PHENOMENA |
| SOC 723 | INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICAL INFERENCE |
| SOC 732 | SOCIOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT |
| SOC 742 | SOCIOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENT |

Ms. Shaifali Rastogi was admitted to the candidacy of the Ph.D. degree in July, 1991 after she successfully completed the written and oral qualifying examinations.



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Synopsis

Over the past few decades, Street-Children have become highly visible in urban centres. Due to their social position and life circumstances, these children are subjected to violence, abuse, deprivation and neglect. As such they form a specially vulnerable subset of suffering children. Globally mounting evidence of their exploitation has now resulted in increased recognition of their problems in both political and civic society. Most newly developed frameworks for protection of children, including the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child invoke special provisions to protect them.

In tune with international concern and in conformity with the country's welfarist ideology, India too has adopted a large number of programmes and services for Street-Children. However, lack of adequate research poses a major problem in programme implementation. Existing studies are primarily target oriented and lack a distinct theoretical approach to children's studies. The present study intends to overcome this lacunae and seeks to uncover the ordinary everyday world of experience of the Street-Children.

The theoretical framework which is most appropriate to the study of Street Children is Symbolic Interactionism. This permits the researcher to view the world from the actor's stand point. Such a theory obviously obviates the bias involved in perceiving and interpreting the child's world from an adult perspective. Moreover, historically, Symbolic Interactionism has been successful in addressing issues related to deviant and marginal groups. In most cases, the latter are seen to arise as a result of society's 'labeling'. Since the term Street-Child also carries a negative societal image, it is necessary to systematically investigate into the cause and effect of such a process.

Symbolic Interactionism not only provides a unique method of data collection (involving participant observation and interview), it also provides an appropriate strategy for selecting reference populations by concentrating on the 'social context of interaction', the 'moral career' of population under study and a processual approach. In the present study, three social contexts have been chosen in Kanpur city -- the Railway Station, the Observation Home, and the Transport Nagar.

The choice of Railway Station not only corresponds to empirical reality but it is also logically valid considering the fact that a large number of children from neigh-

bouring regions come to Kanpur by rail. The Observation Home affords a study in the evolution of the 'moral career of a Street-Child. Preliminary findings show that the child who is on the street may be nabbed by the police and lodged at the Observation Home. After the stipulated period of detention, the child may be on the streets again. Hence, there are chances of encountering the same child on the street and also in the Observation Home. The Transport Nagar provides a glimpse into the true context of abandonment which forces children to the street. During the 1992 riots in Kanpur, many children of this neighbourhood were rendered homeless.

The Interactionist perspective emphasizes the subjective interpretation of social reality and thus methodologically enjoys detailed descriptions. Hence in the study, findings are presented as detailed descriptions. These call into question many common adult middle class assumptions.

The findings show that a Western middle class ideology has governed attitudes towards children living in the streets. Street-Children are depicted as being in urgent need of institutional care, education, organised activities and re-orientation in time and space. They need to be pulled from the street to home and time spent on work is to be diverted to activities of a more useful nature.

But, Street-Children have a different perspective. They consider home as an extension of the street. It shares with street-life all the characteristics -- violence, abuse and deprivation which demonise the street for law-making society. Conversely, the street is neither hostile and alien nor an obstacle to their moral development. Engagement in productive labour is also an important aspect of reality, both at home and outside it and paves the way for fulfilment of ambitions and provides support for the family.

The findings also show that legal definitions of Street-Children put undue emphasis on physical and biological factors, ignoring social and cultural determinants which shape childhood in different societies. The study directs attention to the fact that welfare institutions are not conducive to the growth of independence and spontaneity of children who live on the streets. On the other hand, they re-inforce a distinct 'Street-Child' identity.

The study concludes by condemning adult society's obsessive interest in institutionalisation of childhood. It suggests that a true appreciation of children's rights must begin by understanding Street-Children's own needs, wants and aspirations. Finally, the study advocates a process of social embeddedness which would make it possible for Street-Children to grow with self-respect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who have contributed through interaction and encouraged towards completion of this thesis. I would express my deep rooted indebtedness to thesis supervisor Dr.(Mrs.) Suhita Ghopra, Asstt. Prof. who has been a constant source of inspiration and guidance during the years of my research work.

I am extremely thankful to Prof. A.K. Sharma for his able guidance. I express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Rajendra Pandey for his keen interest and valuable guidance. I had the privilege of learning from him during my research work. I also thank Profs. K.N. Sharma, Raka Saran, B.N. Patnaik, R.R. Bhargwal, K.K. Saxena, B.H. Baruah for their helpful suggestions.

I owe my gratitude to all those who have helped me in conducting research. My thanks are due to the organizations ILO, UNICEF, Ministry of Welfare, NIPCCD, ICCW. Butterflies, for providing me literature on the subject.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to all those persons who directly or indirectly helped me, specifically all the students of the faculty during the research work.

I would like to thank Mr. A.K. Srivastava for neat typing and editing of my work. Lastly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur for providing me an opportunity to do research work.

Shaifali

SHAIFALI RASTOGI

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Street Children is a global one and exists in both the developed and developing countries, with a difference only in size and magnitude. However, the concept is of recent origin and does not comply with any scientific criterion. This is so, because it is extremely difficult to give a definite set of characteristics which can be attributed to a Street Child. To offer a definition of street children is difficult for various reasons. The term is not precise and covers a number of categories, such as 'juvenile delinquents', 'latchkey children', 'child labourers', 'school drop-outs', and 'maladjusted children'. Many of these categories of children, at various times, spend a significant part of their day in the street without necessarily sharing any common characteristics. Various epithets are also used for Street Children - 'children without families', 'high risk children', 'unattached children', 'children in need of care and protection', 'abandoned children'. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called them 'children in difficult circumstances'.

Despite these difficulties various definitions can be found in the literature. The Inter-NGO Programme for Street Children and Street Youth has drawn a definition of

Street Children in the early 1980s as follows:

"Street children are those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word : i.e., unoccupied dwellings, wasteland etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults."¹

The above definition lays emphasis on Place of Dwelling i.e., street and 'unprotected' state of life. A more expanded conceptualization of Street Children is given by UNICEF (1988) which lays emphasis on the place of congregation, a set of living and working conditions, time spent in the street and their vulnerability.

"The term denotes a place of congregation, but also a certain set of working and living conditions. The vast majority are on the street to make a living for their families and for themselves. The return may be paltry, and may be in kind rather in cash, for these children the street is above all a work place. Second, they spend large amounts of time in the street frequently because of the low returns on their labour. Third, most make their way in the informal sector as petty hawkers, shoe-shine boys, scavengers of raw material or even thieves and street prostitutes. Fourth, by the nature of their work and life they are normally on their own, largely unprotected by adults. For these reasons, above all others, they are vulnerable to many dangers and abuses, and they tend to receive few services essential to their protection and development."²

In the wisdom of the U.K. Committee for UNICEF, not all Street Children are alike. Hence, one way of defining them is on the basis of their relationship with their families.

- (1) "About 75 per cent of street children maintain contact with their families. They work on the street either under the supervision of employers inside or outside

their family or are in business for themselves. They spend most nights with their family, contrary to popular belief.

- (2) A growing percentage, currently some 20 per cent, spend all their days and some nights on the streets or in public places. Their families have not abandoned them, nor have they abandoned their families, but poverty, violence, drink and sexual abuse have forced them out of their homes. These children are increasingly vulnerable to the abuse and exploitation of street life and often develop a very negative view of themselves.
- (3) Children who have no family at all make up 5 per cent of all street children. They include orphans, run-aways, refugees; these abandoned children suffer deep emotional disturbance."³

Using a similar theme, the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF categorises them as :

1. "The Children on the Street

By far the largest of three categories consists primarily of working children who still have family connections of a more or less regular nature. Their focus in life is still the home. A very few attend school. Most return home at the end of each working day and most will have a sense of belonging to the local community in which their home is situated. They are children on the streets.

2. Children of the Street

This second group is smaller but more complex. Children in this group see the street as their home and it is there that they seek shelter, food and a sense of family among companions. Family ties exist but are remote and their former home is visited infrequently. They are children of the street.

3. Abandoned Children

This third group may appear to form part of the

second group and in daily activities are particularly indistinguishable. However, by virtue of having severed all ties with a biological family, they are entirely on their own, not just for material but also for psychological survival. They are also children of the street."⁴

Depending upon the definitions, varying estimates are provided by different organizations. These range from thirty-one million to a hundred million street children. An estimate by Anti-Slavery Society, U.K. indicates that globally, there are 31 million street children⁵ while the World Health Organization (1993) estimates that 100 million children are forced to live on the streets and majority of them are living in the cities of developing countries. Out of 100 million, 40 million are in Latin America, 20-30 million in Asia and one million in Africa.⁶ It is projected that their number would increase by 16 million by 2000 AD as a result of wide-spread diseases.⁷

All street children earn their own livelihood. Logically speaking, every street child is a child labour although the latter category may not subsume street children only. Globally, estimates of child labour are equally conflicting, depending upon the various parameters resorted to by international organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).⁸ Overruling the variations in definitions, it is necessary to look at the

following estimates of child labour to understand the magnitude of the problem with reference to Street Children. The UN Commission for Human Rights estimates their number to be 145 million, while the UNESCO places the estimate at more than 300 million.⁹ Globally, more than 200 million children between 4-14 years of age, work everyday for their livelihood and more than 95 percent are from developing countries.¹⁰

Child labour constitutes the most heinous exploitation of childhood. The dreadful catalogue of abuse related to children in work situation knows no end. Child labour exists all over the world despite the fact that many countries have enacted legislative measures against its practice. In the industrialised countries, it has become a relatively marginal phenomenon but has not disappeared entirely. In fact, it is witnessing a certain increase in magnitude with growing economic recession. The United States, for instance, has witnessed an increase of 250 per cent in child labour. Twenty-eight per cent of 15 year old and 51 per cent of 16-17 year old are employed during a given period of the year.¹¹ In the New York city alone, more than 1,50,000 children are employed in the garment industry (some of them as young as 10 years) in violation of government laws and in conditions considered barbaric half a century ago.¹² In Birmingham, U.K., a study revealed that 43 per cent of children between 10-16 years of age work over

the legal limits in one way or the other. Some 75 per cent of child labour are illegally employed. In Italy, tens of thousands of children work in the leather and shoe-industry.¹³

In the developing countries, the situation has taken a more rampant form. The ILO (1996) places the total number of child labour at 250 million, representing a manifold increase over 73 million such children estimated in an earlier study conducted at the beginning of the same year. Out of these, 61 per cent (153 million) are found in Asia, 32 per cent (80 million) in Africa, and 7 per cent (17.5 million) in Latin America. Of these 250 million child labour, 120 million are full time workers and the rest engaged in part-time employments.¹⁴

Data on child labour merely indicates the number of children working in gainful occupations categorised by International and National Labour Organizations. It does not portray the plight of children who earn their livelihood through occupations which are highly a'social and demeaning to human dignity. Special mention may be made of child prostitution which has got linked to poverty and homelessness caused by economic and political upheavals in different parts of the world. An estimated one million children are drawn into commercial sexual exploitation every year in the world.¹⁵ In United States, there are around 1,00,000 child

prostitutes. In Moscow, an estimated 1,000 boys and girls of tender ages sell their bodies. In Norwegian countries, about one million children are either kidnapped, bought in other ways and forced to enter the sex market. Estimates of child prostitution in a few Latin American and Caribbean countries are : Venezuela (48,000), Brazil (2,00,000), Belem (30,000), Costa Rica (2000) and Peru (50,000).¹⁶

Child prostitution is also rampant in South-East Asian Countries. The estimates come close to 10,000 in Bangladesh, 2,00,000-5,00,000 in China, 60,000 in Phillippines, 10,000-15,000 in Sri Lanka, 2,00,000-2,50,000 in Thailand and 4,000 in Vietnam.¹⁷ Needless to say, such children lead a very deplorable life.

According to UNICEF (1994), the plight of Street Children is only part of the story of neglect of children in general in both developed and the developing world. In Brazil, a child dies of hunger every two minutes. An estimated 190 million children under the age of five are chronically malnourished.¹⁸ The problem is equally widespread in South-Asia where half of the world's malnourished children exist. Children also suffer from large number of diseases. According to UNICEF, five major diseases (Pneumonia, Diarrhoea, Measles, Tetanus and Whooping Cough) today kill over eight million children a year and malnutrition holds back the development of one child in three in the developing world.¹⁹ WHO estimates that one million children

have become infected with HIV and over two million have died from AIDS. There would be ten million children on their own in Africa by the end of the decade--orphaned, abandoned or runaways, vulnerable in their turn to HIV-infection as they take to life on the street.²⁰

Political and armed conflicts have also created disastrous consequences for children. In the last decade alone, an estimated 1.5 million children have been killed in armed conflicts. A further 4 million have been disabled. At least 5 million have become refugees, and 12 million more have been uprooted from their communities.²¹

Despite the pathetic state of children, UNICEF (1993) is optimistic of bringing about improvement in their lives. Only 25 million per year is needed for their decent living. This, says UNICEF, is not a heavy amount.²²

"It is much less than the amount the Japanese Government has allocated to the building of a new highway from Tokyo to Kobe, it is two to three times as much as the cost of the tunnel soon to be opened between the United Kingdom and France, it is less than the cost of the Ataturk Dam Complex now being constructed in the eastern Turkey; it is a little more than Hong Kong proposes to spend on a new airport; it is about the same as the support package that the Group of Seven has agreed on in 1992 for Russia alone; and it is significantly less than Europeans will spend this year on wine or Americans on Beer." (p.1)

This view of UNICEF was expressed by its Executive Director, J.P. Grant in 1993. In 1980s when Grant embarked

on a mission to gather political will for the children's cause, he never foresaw how successful he would be. Today, children's issues crowd the public policy agenda and preoccupy the media at national and international level.

The origin of the child's cause can be traced back to the First World War, after which the special right for children was first acknowledged in the 'Declaration of Geneva', which was promulgated in 1924 and endorsed by the League of Nations in the same year. It was revised in 1948 and adopted unanimously in November, 1959. After the Second World War, relief programmes for children were carried out by various agencies. During the same period another campaign for 'World Development' emerged to put an end to poverty as part of development debate. To make the campaign more humane, the hungry and malnourished child became its symbol. During the 1970s certain amount of disillusion with theories of development took place and children's cause started drowning progressively leaving aside issues such as street children and abused children. By 1980s the cause of the child was refound with the efforts of children's NGOs and UNICEF.²³

The next chapter outlines in detail the evolution of the children's cause.

Notes and References

1. See Ennew, Judith. Street and Working Children, Development:4, London, 1994, p.15.
2. See Pandey, R. Street Children of India, Chugh Publications, Allahabad, 1991, pp.16-17.
3. *ibid*, p.17.
4. National Workshop on Street Children, New Delhi, Aug. 29-30, 1988, p.2.
5. Phillips, W.S.K. Street Children of Indore, National Labour Institute, Noida, 1992, p.6.
6. A report published in July 1984 states that more than thirty million children live on the streets of Brazil alone, which evidently makes the earlier estimate of forty millions for the whole Latin America as too conservative (Street Children of Indore, Phillips, W.S.K., National Labour Institute, Noida, 1992, p.6).
7. ILO, World of Work, No. 4, June 1993, p.31.
8. Within the United Nations there are several specialised committees and organs which are devoted to children's issues:

The Human Rights Committee has created the working group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, which has now become a meeting place for United Nations experts and non-governmental organizations on child labour. In 1993, it adopted a draft action programme for the elimination of child labour. The UN has promulgated the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

Organizations in the system are :

WHO - Since 1979 it has carried out studies on impact of work on children's health.

UNESCO-it deals with child labour since the latter prevents children from fully participating in the existing educational systems.

UNICEF-has been developing since 1986 a new programme directed towards Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC), especially those who live and work in the streets.

UNIFPA-(United Nations Population Fund) indirectly contributes to the reduction of child labour through its family planning and youth education programme.

9. Report of NGO Workshop on Street and Working Children in Union Territory, Delhi, July 16-17, 1987, p.26.
10. Global March Against Child Labour. The Statesman, Delhi, March 23, 1997.
11. ILO, World of Work, No. 4, June, 1993, p.5.
12. *ibid*, pp. 5-6.
13. *ibid*.
14. Child Labour on the Rise. The Times of India, Delhi, March 10, 1994.
15. Sexual Exploitation, The Pioneer, Sept. 11, 1996.
16. Panicker, R. (ed). My Name is Today, 1992-May 1996, pp. 25, 27,32.
17. *ibid*. p.51.
18. UNICEF, The State of The World's Children, 1994, p.16.
19. *ibid*. p.1.
20. *ibid*. p.44.
21. *ibid*. p.4.
22. UNICEF, The State of The World's Children, 1993, p.1.
23. Black, Maggie. Taking Children Seriously : The Rise of the Children's Cause. Development, 1996:1, pp. 23-26.

Chapter II

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHILDREN'S CAUSE

The special rights of children to internationally guaranteed protections was first acknowledged after the First World War. In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the World Child Welfare Charter, as a result of a campaign by the Save the Children International Union. The United Nations endorsed the text of a somewhat longer declaration in 1959. After the Second World War, children received attention as a result of an international mission to protect them from ill-effects of war-related deprivation. Relief programmes for children in Europe and Asia were carried out by NGOs and governments, including a new off-shoot of the then constituted United Nations machinery, UNICEF. The humanitarian operations, instead of being temporary, took the shape of a new international mission. Mass campaigns against various diseases were undertaken on the assumption that children suffered most from effects of all epidemic and endemic diseases.

Post Second World War, the hungry and malnourished child also became a symbol in the movement for 'World development', and the call for a more humane rearrangement

of wealth between nations. At the United Nations, a crusade was launched to put an end to poverty characterizing millions of lives in the developing world. Unfortunately, the needs of children as children became submerged within the quest for an effective response to much larger problems. Children's improvement took place as part of the improvement of the lives of the poor people. Thus, throughout the development debates of the 1960s and 1970s, UNICEF asserted that 'investing in our most precious resource' was a vital part of more general efforts to transform the lives of poor people in developing countries. 'Basic services' were defined as services that would improve the lives of poor people and, therefore, of children, although some of the components--education and maternal and child health care, for example directly targeted the child.

During the 1970s there was general disillusionment with theories of development predicated on economic growth and technology transfer. There was a renewed search for alternatives which were people and poverty centered. This quest for alternative strategies was considered legitimate to view children's needs specifically tackled within larger programmes.¹

The non-governmental organization (NGO) children's lobby saw the children's cause differently. It realised that 'development' is by no means an automatic aid to chil-

dren's well-being. In fact, a lot that was happening in its name was creating new categories of disadvantaged childhood. The children's cause was being progressively drowned by the noise surrounding others, leaving issues related to street children and abused children trapped in a child casualty--or worse, a child truancy--perspective. In order to bring children back into public eye, the children's NGOs pressed for 1979 to be declared as United Nations 'International Year of the Child' (IYC). During the year, two movements were carried out on behalf of children -- 'children as children' and children as a 'specially vulnerable sub-set of suffering humanity'. The year promoted research into certain neglected issues of childhood like child labour, child slavery, and child prostitution, etc. The year also paved the way, ten years later, for the replacement of the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child with an international convention in the form of 'The United Nations Convention On The Rights of The Child, 1989'.²

The 1980s were in general, regarded as development's 'lost decade'. But for children, their cause was re-found. UNICEF launched its proponent J.P. Grant's Child Survival Revolution (CSR) to re-activate the development crusade in a climate of severe retrenchment caused by OPEC oil shock, overlending, borrowing, debt, budgetary cuts and structural adjustment.

In the 1990s, although much of the spirit of regeneration in international affairs has been lost, the new recognition of the importance of children is still with us. This is primarily due to the successful internationalism in action by UNICEF in carrying forward the message of the agenda agreed at the World Summit for Children, 1990. Much of the idea of a unified campaign for development as the answer to 'World poverty' seems to have run its historical course. It no longer makes sense to base a campaign for "the child in distress" or "the most vulnerable members of the population at large" within a perspective ^{i.e., development} which implies a ~~binary~~ vision of both problem and ~~its solution~~. Similarly, it is no longer wise to position activity on behalf of children within the great 'development' crusade. In the 1990s, an additional need has risen : to protect children from the great 'development' debacle. The need is to speak in terms of the child's individual rights and democratic freedom. The advent of the International Rights Framework has been articulated in the Convention On The Rights of the Child, 1989,³ and the goals were set at the World Summit for Children, 1990. Almost all countries support the World Summit's goals for children and women. They (7 major, 20 supporting goals) constitute the best social development investment a society can make. These goals for the year 2000 A.D. were also endorsed by the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development (The Earth Summit, 1992). Keeping those commitments for progress in social

development, the World Summit for Social Development took place in Denmark, 1995, with the aim of combating poverty, unemployment and social integration.⁴ Children's issue has attained such importance at the international level that child labour has been included in the agenda of the forthcoming 1998 Session of the International Labour Conference.⁵

Traditionally, children have been seen as objects of charity in the spirit of protecting the vulnerable and care for their well-being. It was not widely recognised that children are capable, that they have opinions, that they deserve respect as all other human beings and they ought to have rights. This was what the movement for child rights wanted to change. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, has stripped away the welfarist connotation which has revolved around the children's debate through all the efforts to centralize it in a development perspective.⁶

2.1 The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) : New Attitudes

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1989. This Convention reaffirmed the faith of member states in fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of human being, without any discrimination, and proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special

care and assistance. The Convention emphasised that as indicated in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1924), "the child by reason of physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". The Convention further urged that special consideration has to be given to "children in especially difficult circumstances". It stressed the need for international co-operation, in this regard.

Highlights of the Convention

According to the Convention, a child means an individual below the age of eighteen years. There are 54 articles in the Preamble to the Convention. A few select articles are reproduced as follows :

.1.1 Select Articles of the Convention

Article 2

- o State Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child
- o State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination

Article 3

- o In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions ..., the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- o State Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the area of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 4

- o State Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized With regards to economic, social and cultural rights

Article 6

- o State Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

- o State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 7

- o The child ... shall have ... the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

Article 8

- o Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all the elements of his or her identity, State Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to speedily re-establishing his or her identity.

Article 9

- o State Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine

Article 12

- o State Parties shall ensure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 13

- o The child shall have the right to freedom of expression

Article 27

- o State Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Article 28

- o State Parties recognize the right of the child to education

Article 31

- o State Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 32

- o State Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from perform-

ing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

- o State Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article State Parties shall in particular :

- (a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment.
- (b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment.
- (c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Article 34

- o State Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Article 35

- o State Parties shall take all ... measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

Article 36

- o State Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Article 39

- o State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of a child victim of : any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse ... inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment ; or armed conflicts.

Article 40

- o A variety of dispositions, such as care, guidance and supervision orders : counseling ; probation ; foster care ; education and vocational training programmes and other alternatives to institutional care shall be available to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being and proportion-

ate both to their circumstances and the offences.⁷

The Convention lays down four principles as guide to the implementation of all substantive articles.

1. "The best interest of child should be the primary consideration of all decisions affecting the child.
2. The child should be free to have opinions in all matters affecting him or her and the views should be given due weight 'in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'.
3. The right-to-life, to include also the rights to survival and to development and not merely the right not to be killed.
4. All of these rights are to be implemented without discrimination -- all children should enjoy their rights."

These four principles and the provision stipulating allocation of the 'maximum extent' of available resources supported the dynamic approach that governments would see the Convention as an instrument for change rather than as a static list of minimum requirements.⁸ The Convention not only provides a reference point for a new vision of childhood and child-related policy, but imposes obligation on State Parties to move towards the realization of a given set of standards.

For effective implementation of the Convention, efforts have been made largely outside formal committee meetings in co-operation with NGOs and partners within the United Nations community. The United Nation Commission on Human Rights has adopted several resolutions on child rights which have supported the Convention. For instance, a Plan of Action has been adopted against the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The UNICEF also provides active co-operation to remove obstacles in the evolution of child rights.⁹

To facilitate further work of interpreting the Convention, an advisory group has also been formed.¹⁰ The group has explored the potential of developing "indicators" for assessing progress in this field. Documentation centres have been developed in Bangkok and Montevideo. UNICEF has established the 'Child Net'. Major support has been provided to NGOs who play a key role in creating awareness about the Convention. As a result of all these efforts, networks have begun to develop and links are being established between national and international agencies.

The Convention has now been in force for more than five years and as a result children are probably higher on the agenda today than ever before. The phenomenon of child labour has become a major issue and reports of violations of

norms can even affect trade relations.¹¹ Several countries (including India) have been prompted to review legislations, to establish ombudswork for children, to co-ordinate child rights policies among ministries and to create an awareness about children's rights among a wider audience. International agencies have assisted government and non-governmental organizations in India to make efforts to improve the quality of life of children, including street children.¹²

The next chapter outlines in detail India's efforts to ameliorate the conditions of children, especially Street Children.

Notes and References

1. Black, Maggie. Taking Children Seriously : The Rise of the Children's Cause. Development, 1996 :1, pp. 24-25.
2. *ibid*, p. 25.
3. *ibid*, p. 26.
4. UNICEF, Children Are Our Future, Aug 1994, pp. 1-2.
5. A new conference is planned because to date, the ILO's main instrument on child labour is the Minimum Age Convention (No.138), which applies to all sectors of economic activity. It encourages member states to set a minimum age that is not less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling. However, only 21 developing countries have ratified this Convention, out of which none are from Asia, where over half of all working children are found. A shortcoming of Convention No.138 is that it does not set priorities for national action, nor does it specify what priority should be given to measures geared to preventing children from working in hazardous conditions that are contrary to basic human rights (ILO, Children and Work, No.2, November, 1996, p.5).
6. Hammarberg, Thomas. The Convention on the Rights of the Child : New Attitudes to Children. Development, 1996:1, p. 27.
7. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, published for the Government of India, 1994.
8. Hammarberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
9. Ref.A Global action against sexual exploitation of children took place in the form of World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of children at Stockholm, Sweden on 27-31 Aug. 1996. More than 1,300 delegates representing governments, international organisations and NGOs from 125 countries gathered and adopted a Declaration and Agenda for Action. The Declaration seeks to criminalize the sexual exploitation of children and penalize offenders. States are also urged to enforce law, policies and implement programmes to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation. (ILO, Children and Work, No.2, November, 1996, p.2) ; Ref.B According to Parfait Moukoko, President of the Congolese Human rights Observatory, "The problem of prostitution (child) must be looked at in the global context of street children". (Where Sex is a Childs Survival Game, The Hindu-
stan Times, Patna, March 29, 1996).

10. Hammarberg, op. cit., p.29
11. See Gathia, J. Child Labour in Terms of Trade. (The Child's Right Bulletin, Vol. V, No. Oct. 2-3, 1994, p.1).
12. India was one of the last countries to ratify the Rights of the Child Convention. The Convention was adopted in 1989 and towards the end of 1992 i.e., 11 December, India ratified it. This shows clearly the reluctance to accede to it and considerable international pressure forced the nation to do so. (Ratification of Convention Mere Window Dressing. Swami Agnivesh, Mainstream, Oct. 2, 1993, pp. 23-28).

Chapter III

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHILDREN'S CAUSE IN INDIA

In tune with international concern, and in conformity with the country's welfarist ideology, India, too, has adopted a large number of child welfare programmes and services. There are specific provisions with respect to the rights and protection of children, both in the Directive Principles of State Policy and in the Fundamental Rights of the Constitution of India. Several legislative measures exist which prescribe the minimum age of entry of children into employment. The Indian experience in the planning of child welfare programmes has created a need to formulate a national policy for children. It adopted a resolution on National Policy for Children in 1974. In order to meet the physical, mental and social needs and all-round development of children, a new scheme namely Integrated Child Development Scheme was also introduced in 1975. Besides, a number of committees have been established to look into the problems of working children. Their recommendations have resulted in the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 which was soon followed by the National Child Labour Policy, 1987.¹ Various correctional services have been discussed under Juvenile Justice Act, 1986.

To supplement the governmental initiatives at the national level, international donor agencies (like ILO) have come forward to support two parallel programmes in 1992 : the Child Labour Action Support Programme (CLASP) ; and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).²

In 1994, the Indian Government declared its intention to withdraw an estimated two million working children from hazardous employment by 2000 A.D. This declaration was followed by a number of important measures such as the setting up of a National Authority for Elimination of Child Labour (NAECL), 1994 and the provision of eight hundred and fifty crore rupees to liberate and rehabilitate two million children from hazardous industries. A sequential and progressive approach to the withdrawal and rehabilitation of working children (of which street children constitute one forth of the group) has been advocated by the government.³

The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the Government of India, announced in June 1996, speaks of elimination of child labour in all occupations. Recently, the Supreme Court of India, has also given directions regarding the manner in which children working in hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn from work and rehabilitated, as also the manner in which the working conditions of children in non-hazardous occupations are to be regulated and improved upon.⁴

3.1 India's Planned Approach to Ameliorate the Conditions of Children

The constitutional provisions indicate the commitment of our nation towards the well-being and proper development of children. Although, child welfare has deep historical roots in our country, the Post Independence period has ushered in a new spirit as reflected in the Five-Year plans.

The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) visualised the major responsibility of developing child welfare services through voluntary efforts. The role of government was by and large confined to financial support, guidance or technical training to child care functionaries engaged in implementation of child welfare schemes. To achieve the target, a number of organizations were formed like the Indian Council of Child Welfare (1952) and Central Social Welfare Board. In the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), the government took initiative to start programmes for the socially handicapped children, i.e. neglected and disabled children, destitutes or, those who come into conflict with law. In the Third (1961-66) and Fourth Plan (1969-75), the State assumed greater responsibility and child welfare services were incorporated into various development sectors like health, nutrition, and education.

The Fifth Plan (1975-79) saw a shift in focus from child welfare to child development with an emphasis on coordination of services. A landmark event during 1974 was the formulation of The National Policy on Children. In 1975, the National Children Board was set up. The same year, the Integrated Child Development Services programme was launched with a package of six services in 33 Blocks in the country. The International Year of the Child (1979) was marked by setting up of a National Children's Fund. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) saw the consolidation and expansion of programmes for children in the areas of health, nutrition and education. For the first time, problems of working children received attention of the planners. Consequently, the National Health Policy (1983) envisaged a package of health services with a special component for mother and child.

The Seventh Plan (1985-92) continued the strategy of promoting early childhood survival and development. In 1985, the Department of Women and Child Development was set up with the responsibility for welfare and development of children and women. Other major events took place in the form of National Policy on Education, 1986, and National Policy on Child Labour, 1987; Legislative measures were also enacted like the Child Labour (Prevention and Regulation) Act, 1986 and the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986.

In pursuance of its commitment to the World Summit on Survival, Protection and Development of Children (1990), India has formulated its National Plan of Action for Children in 1992. The emphasis during the Eighth Plan (1992-97) has been on convergence of services, on advocacy and social mobilization to empower the community for the rights of the child. This period has witnessed the adoption of the National Nutrition Policy (in 1993) ; setting up of a NGO Cell by the Department of Women and Child Development (in 1994); launching of Pulse Polio Immunization Programme (in 1995); and formulation of a Communication Strategy for Child Development (in 1996). The strategy for the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) is to emphasize child development not only as a desirable societal investment for the nation's future, but as the right of every child to achieve full development potential.

Over the years, India has also built-up a large administrative machinery for child welfare and development comprising more than 13 Government Ministries/Departments, supported by autonomous bodies, over one lakh voluntary organizations and private agencies.

Thus, we see that India's attempts in the field of child welfare and protection of children's rights is consonant with the policies, aims and objectives formulated in the major international events already discussed earlier. In particular, India's accession to the Conven-

tion on The Rights of the Child, 1989 has marked a major landmark in the history of the struggle for children's cause.

India has also been collaborating with major international actors. Its association with UNICEF is now 50 years old and this partnership is currently being commemorated with the theme, "Towards an Enabling Environment--Five Decades of INDIA-UNICEF Partnership in the Service of Children." India is trying create an enabling environment "where needs of the child are fulfilled and child right made a reality."⁵

Despite efforts by the Indian government, the quality of lives of children has not improved to the desired level. At least 2 million children are still estimated to be working in hazardous occupations in the country. According to the Government's assessment of the situation, poverty is the main cause of child labour. In 1979, during the International Year of the Child, a 16 member committee appointed by the Labour Ministry also identified poverty as the important cause of Street Children phenomenon and recommended education as an important means to remove poverty.⁶ It is estimated that there are 170 million children aged 6-14 in the country and almost 40 million of them are out of school.⁷ To face the situation, state governments have been asked to formulate Area and Category specific Action Plans.

Mid-day meals, and special focus on Girl Child constitute other measures. There is also an attempt to move from sectoral to cross-sectoral, specialized to integrated and unipurpose to multipurpose schemes.⁸ But, instead of decreasing the problems of children in the country, the number of neglected, abused, destitute, working and Street Children is swelling day by day. Increase in their numbers is also accompanied by ~~the~~ ^{deteriorating} life conditions.

To achieve the above goals, it is imperative to know the accurate number of child workers. Unfortunately, this is a major lacunea in attaining justice in children's cause. Several studies have been conducted but the precise magnitude of children's problem is yet to be known. Conflicting estimates are given by various agencies depending on their objectives and definitions for different categories of children.

3.2. Street Children in India : A Review of Literature

3.2.1 Estimates

There are quite conflicting estimates about the magnitude of the phenomenon in India. UNDP (1994) believes that India has the largest population of street children in the world.⁹ While the NGOs quote the number of street children at about 100 million to 110 million, the Operations

Research Group places the figure at about 40 million. According to one suggestion, for all practical purposes this estimate should be 80 million as these many children of school-going age are either dropouts or without any means to sustain themselves.¹⁰ The Census of India does not provide data pertaining specifically to street children. However, available data for other categories (working children, child labour and child-beggars, etc.) indicates the magnitude of the problem.

Today, India is the home of the largest number of working children. According to present estimates, there are about 20 million working children in the country of which two million are working in hazardous occupations.¹¹ According to the 1991 Census, there are 11.29 million child labour in India. However, according to the estimates of Non-Governmental Organizations, the figures could be between 44 million to 100 million.¹² The State representative of the UNICEF (1997) believes that at least 73 million children in India are employed as child labour. This constitutes approximately 25 per cent of the total child population in the country. It further states that variations in data arise because children working in some sectors are often not included in the sample. For instance, in 1985, the National Sample Survey (NSS) put the estimated figures as low as 17.5 million. This estimation did not take account of children who are sex workers, rag-pickers and who work in hotels, as domestic helps and in various plantations.¹³ According to

ILO (1996) there are 12.67 million full time child labour and 10.50 million marginal child labour.¹⁴ (See Appendix-1). Child labour constitutes almost 5.2 per cent of the total workforce in India.¹⁵

Whatever may be the actual number of child labour, it is indisputable that the phenomenon is on the rise in almost all states of India. Andhra Pradesh records the highest child labour population, while Orissa has the lowest (See Appendix-2). The state of Uttar Pradesh has shown a tremendous increase in the number of full time urban child workers (See Appendix-3).

There is no detailed national level study specifically on Street Children. However, data pertaining to select 10 cities of India is available which indicates that 369-419,000 children are living and working on the streets.¹⁶ In the Union Territory of Delhi alone as many as 1,00,000 street children exist. It is estimated that out of every 700 working children, about 30 percent are Street Children.¹⁷ Calcutta, one of the most populous cities in India, also has a large number of children living in its streets. Though no census has been conducted, yet the estimate would be around 75,000 to 1,00,000. Bangalore too has around 45,000 Street children, and out of these, approximately 25,000 are said to be homeless (See Appendix-4)

Although Street Children are a special category into themselves, the most neglected and vulnerable sub-group comprises of the Abandoned Children. Data on this sub-group is equally sparse. Roughly one in twenty Indian babies is abandoned soon after birth due to social and economic pressures. This amounts to a million abandoned children each year or 3000 each day or 2 babies per minute.¹⁸

A Task Force set up by Delhi Administration (to provide protection and basic services to abandoned, orphan and destitute children of the capital) found that there are about four lakh working children and one-fourth of them have no family relations.¹⁹

The above data indicates that the problem of Street Children is a serious one and urgently needs steps to rectify the situation. The kind of society we wish to have in the future will depend upon the kind of developmental, protective and welfare opportunities provided to its present day children.

3.2.2 Living and Working Conditions

Several studies have depicted the plight of Street and Working Children. A review of these studies show that majority of children are first generation migrants.²⁰

However, there are regional variations in data. Migrants constitute cent per cent of sample population (2301) in Calcutta and 90 per cent of population in Bombay and Hyderabad (2169, 2306) respectively. Non-migrants are in greater number in Madras (76.5 per cent out of 2000), in Kanpur (90.4 per cent out of 1250), and Bangalore (78.1 per cent out of 1750). The study conducted in Bombay further shows that 20.6 per cent (out of 2169) migrated due to unemployment, natural disasters, lack of opportunities.²¹ Inflation, cuts in social sector may also be one of the compelling factors for their migration.²² Shroff and Chikarmane found rapid industrialization and the need to support poor family members responsible for the presence of children in the urban streets.²³ Cruelty on part of parents, relatives and neighbours also drive children to the streets. They are subject to neglect and abuse. Desertion due to litigation among family members also constitute an important push factor.²⁴

Some studies explain the phenomenon of Street Children in terms of need deprivation in which biological needs are ranked first, followed by psychological needs. The need for education ranks the last.²⁵ Studies on child labour revealed that due to distressing economic conditions, parents felt compelled to enroll their children in the labour market. Others were motivated to earn and live like their colleagues in the community.²⁶

Various studies have made attempts to describe children's living and working conditions. In general, these studies indicate that working (including Street Children) children are engaged in different types of activities which are not conducive to their physical, mental, social and economic development.

Family :

Data related to family background shows that in a study of 15,901 Street Children, 77 per cent live with their family members.²⁷ Ninety per cent of the Ragpickers in Delhi belong to nuclear families. Although these children live in acute poverty, they were sympathetic towards their parents. But they also expressed their anger due to rejection and frequent physical abuse, neglect and overwork.

Nature of Shelter :

With or without family, the living conditions of Street Children is very poor. The best shelter available to them is a ramshackle hut in a slum and the worst is the street. Analysis shows that on an average, 47.4 per cent (out of 15,901) Street Children spend their nights on the open streets. In Calcutta, almost every street child (99.6 per cent out of 2301) sleeps in the open at night, while in Bombay the figure is 61.6 per cent (out of 2169).

They also spend their nights in shops, dhabas, and autocentres. A majority of Street Children (90 per cent) are exposed to dirt, smoke and other environmental hazards.

nutritional and Health Status :

About eighty-eight per cent children do not have access to bath and privy. They use public parks, unused land and railway tracks for defecating, and ponds, rivulets and public taps for the purpose of cleaning themselves. They are thus, forced to live in insanitary and unhygienic surroundings which lead to various health hazards. The nutritional and health status of these children is poor because of inadequate food and limited opportunity for medical care. The study in Calcutta shows that 78.6 per cent Street Children are undernourished and 4.2 per cent severely malnourished. A large number of children get their first meal around mid-day as they have to earn before they can buy a meal. Only a few have cash on them in the morning. Because of the fear of losing money, they try to spend all of it before going off to sleep.²⁸

work :

Right from the day children venture on the streets, they become embroiled in struggle for survival

which means taking any odd job that comes their way. Children have only instrumental value for their employers who are confident that the question of survival would not permit children to leave their job. This results in inhuman treatment. Low or no wages, prolonged working hours (sometimes stretching upto 16-18 hours in a day), and work without adequate rest is a routine feature of their lives. They are punished, abused, humiliated and neglected on the slightest pretext. They are also reduced to greater subservience than adults in the work sphere and are subjected to exaggerated forms of control and exploitation : overwork, work at night, low wages and physical abuse.²⁹

Attitude towards employers and work:

Inadequate wages and economic exploitation leads to negative attitude towards the employer. According to Pandey (1991) 27 per cent (out of 1250) Street Children have negative attitude towards their employer.³⁰ Other studies have reported only 30 per cent and 24.3 per cent child workers having cordial relationship with their adult co-workers and employers.³¹ But according to another study 88.6 per cent of children were satisfied with the treatment accorded to them by their employers. Around fifteen per cent were not satisfied with their salary, 66.6 per cent with the length of their working hour, 13.7 per cent with the physical conditions of work, 5.9 per cent with the

facilities and benefits available and 3.9 per cent with the treatment of their employer and 2.4 per cent with the treatment of their colleagues. Their wages range from Rs. 5/= per month to Rs. 300/= per month.³² From financial perspective, rag-picking and work at dhaba are considered lucrative, while job at automobile centres is least satisfying. Street Children have negligible savings and there is always a fear of intimidation from police and local gang leaders.³³

Nature of Work Place :

Generally, Street children work in the open air without any shelter from vagaries of weather. Children working in tea-stalls and dhabas are exposed to heat without adequate clothing and footwear. In other work sites also, they have to work in ill-ventilated places without basic amenities. They are crowded in small rooms with skitting heat and have restricted space for their movements. This affects their health and retards their physical growth.³⁴

Nature of Work :

The nature of work is also highly injurious to health. For instance, work in the lock and brassware industry involves activities of polishing, electroplating, spray-printing and working on handpress which are all highly hazardous. In the brick-klin industry, children risk injury

from work, as well as silicosis of the lungs after three or four years of exposure to brick dust. Even supposedly safe occupations like rag-picking pose health hazards, specially skin diseases. Children who are engaged in prostitution suffer from various sexual diseases.³⁵

Table No. 1 shows the nature of health hazards in different industries in which street children work.

Table 1: Nature of health hazards in different industries

| Industry | Health hazards |
|-------------------------|--|
| Bidi | Chronic bronchitis, tuberculosis |
| Glass | Asthama, bronchitis, tuberculosis and eye diseases |
| Handloom | Asthama and tuberculosis |
| Zari and embroidery | Eye defects |
| Gem and diamond cutting | Eye defects |
| Construction | Stunts the growth of the child |
| Rag-picking | ^{etc} Typhus, skin disease |
| Pottery | Asthama, bronchitis, tuberculosis |
| Stone/slate quarries | Silicosis |

Table No. 2 provides data on the type of job in which street children are engaged and the nature of risks

associated with the same. Nearly 8.3 per cent (out of 300) have reported accidents while on job. Twenty per cent of the children working at tea stalls, 16 per cent working in garages, 12 per cent working in hotels and an equal number doing manual work reported having sustained injuries while on the job.

Table 2: Nature of Jobs and Accidents

| NATURE OF JOBS AND ACCIDENTS | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| S. No. | Accidents | Organi- sed* | Shoe Polishing | Haw king | Street Vendor | Rag Picking | Begging |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. | No | 0.3 (1) | 6.9 (19) | 4.0 (11) | 1.0 (3) | 8.7 (24) | 15.6 (43) |
| 2. | Yes | - - | 4.0 (1) | 8.0 (2) | - - | 4.0 (1) | 4.0 (1) |
| Total | | 0.3 (1) | 6.7 (20) | 4.5 (13) | 1.0 (3) | 8.5 (25) | 14.6 (44) |

| Coolie Labour | Serving at Tea Stall | Service in Garage | Service in Hotel | Domestic Service | Any other | Not Appli- cable | Total | |
|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 2.1 (6) | 5.0 (14) | 12.7 (35) | 10.1 (28) | 10.1 (28) | 2.5 (7) | 19.2 (53) | 1.8 (5) | 91.7 (275) |
| 8.0 (2) | 12.0 (3) | 20.0 (5) | 16.4 (4) | 12.0 (3) | - - | 12.0 (3) | - - | 8.3 (25) |
| 2.7 (8) | 5.6 (17) | 12.7 (38) | 10.6 (32) | 10.3 (31) | 2.3 (7) | 18.6 (56) | 1.6 (5) | 100 (300) |

Source : Street Children of Indore, 1992. p.90

* As reported in the original text

A study conducted by NIPCCD (1988) reveals that harassment by police officials is one of the main disturbing factors in carrying out the job smoothly.³⁶ According to Human Rights Watch (1997) during the years 1990 and 1994, 15 children have died in police custody and one in a Remand Home in 1996. Of the 100 children interviewed, 60 complained of detention, beating, extortion and verbal abuse. Several factors contribute to the situation : police perception of street children as criminals, widespread corruption among police and a culture of violence, inadequate legal safeguards regarding rehabilitation and government's failure to implement safeguards that already exist.³⁷

Two other facts clearly emerge from studies reviewed. Firstly, living and working on the street involves a price and that price is a regular pay off to public authorities. Secondly, public authorities use abuse as the main instrument to ensure compliance. Many children have alleged that arrests are made to fulfill the annual targets at police stations and reformatories.

To mobilize activities and to implement programmes related to children's cause, NGOs can play an important role.³⁸ They should, in cooperation with the public, build consciousness about the quality of services required to meet the needs of street and working children. The role of voluntary organizations is indispensable for enhancing the initiatives of the Government.

3.2.3 Services to Street Children : A few Projects

The review of literature indicates that while government agencies are mainly focusing their attention on legal measures and provision of institutional care for street children, non-governmental organizations are attempting various facets of child development through institutional care, non-campus services, development of projects (to understand perceived needs of children) and raising public awareness through conferences and seminars. The NGOs are also engaged in creating job opportunities free from exploitative situations.

Some of the programmes involve a very creative approach to street children. The Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW), the single largest agency in the voluntary sector, is engaged in promoting development services for the child. Its programmes include : training for grassroot workers, adoption, sponsorship schemes for handicapped children, National Awards for Bravery, painting competition, learn to live together (national integration) and publications for developing awareness among the public.³⁹ Mention may also be made of the BOSCO Programme which intends to develop both the environment, as well as "inner resource" to restore street children's self-confidence. The programme attempts to understand, the world of street children and

helps them to grow.⁴⁰ The Rag-picker's Project in Bangalore attempts to improve the quality of life of the abused and exploited street children. The project's approach is to provide the needed climate and environment through educational, recreational and developmental activities, along with the provisions of first-aid and medical facilities.⁴¹ SEWA, which has been working since 1981 also runs schemes for rag-pickers like non-formal education, job placement services, health and hygiene and saving schemes.⁴² The Delhi Council for Child Welfare (DCCW) has around 80 children on their rolls to whom they provide facilities for bath and privy. Their main focus is on non-formal education, vocational training and provision of mid-day meal.⁴³ The Theatre Action Group in Delhi (TAG) works with unlicensed coolie boys at the New Delhi railway station. Saving schemes for street-children, provision of formal education, recreation and consciousness-raising are the main activities.⁴⁴ To improve the creative potential and working capacity of Street Children many agencies have recommended innovative measures. The NGO Workshop (1987) recommended that there should be no direct intervention in the life of self-employed children working primarily in the unorganised sector. It proposed a gradual programmed approach in which the initial phases of project implementation were to be utilized in knowing the perceived needs of children and then to build interventions and assistance schemes that respond to those needs. The final phases were to provide developmental opportunities and aim at the integration of the chil-

dren with the society. In between these phases, the workshop suggested stages of creating friendship with the children and when their self-confidence stabilizes, to provide shelter and basic services.⁴⁵ Other ingenious examples of helping street children include the setting of the SOS children's villages in Bhopal (after the gas tragedy) and in Uttar Kashi (after the earthquake of 1991). Four more villages are intended to be set up at Rajpura (Punjab), Hyderabad (A.P.), Jammu and Shillong (Meghalaya).⁴⁶

Organization of Apna Mela in Delhi (1995)⁴⁷, All India Street Children's Conference in Bombay (1996)⁴⁸, National Convention of Child Labour (1997)⁴⁹ and the Children's Panchayat (1997)⁵⁰ are other ingenious attempts to improve the lives of Street Children.

Notes and References

1. Verma, A.P. Forward to the Report of Workshops for District Collectors and Project Directors on Child Labour, June, 1996.
2. Report on National Seminar on Implementation of Child Labour Projects, Noida, March, 1997, pp. 2-8.
3. Verma, loc. cit.
4. Ref.A The year 1996 witnessed a landmark judgement of the Supreme Court of India, in a writ Petition (Civil) No. 465/1986, directing employers of child labour in hazardous industries to set up a corpus fund for rehabilitation of child labour. A bench consisting of Justice Kuldeep Singh, Justice B.L. Hansaria and Justice S.B. Majumdar recalled Tagore's words in the context stated "let the child of the 21st century find himself into that heaven of freedom which our poet-laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore has spoken in Gitanjali."

The court has directed all offending employers to pay a compensation of Rs. 20,000 for every child under the provisions of Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which would be deposited in a fund known as 'Child Labour Rehabilitation cum Welfare Fund'. In addition, the state has been asked to ensure that at least one adult member of the working child's family be employed, failing which Rs. 5,000 be contributed to the fund which is aimed at educating the child (The Times of India, New Delhi, Dec. 11, 1996); Ref.B With a view to addressing the problem of child labour in its totality, the Government of India has been fully funding the National Child Labour Projects under implementation at the district level. So far, 76 National Child Labour Projects have been sanctioned in 11 States to rehabilitate around 1.5 lakh children. As per the information received from the 72 Child Labour Project Societies, so far 1.04 lakh children have already been covered through 1810 schools (Report on National Seminar on Implementation of Child Labour Projects, March 1997, p.11).

Gopalan, Sarla Secretary, Ministry of HRD, Government of India in a message in The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, November 14, 1996.

6. Robert M. Press. On the Road. Indian Express, New Delhi, March 20, 1994.
7. The Indian Express, New Delhi, April 6, 1995.
8. The SAARC countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives) have resolved to eliminate the evil of child labour from the region by 2010 and launch a comprehensive nutritive drive in South Asia. The SAARC nations also recommended that the decade 2001-2010 be declared as "The SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child". (SAARC Vows to Eliminate Child Labour by 2010, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, September 18, 1996).
9. Smith, P. Butterflies in the Streets, The Statesman, Calcutta, March 5, 1994.
10. Malhotra, P. Homeless and Alone, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, December 11, 1996.
11. Report of the Seminar on Elimination of Child Labour and Child Beggary, October 26, 1996, p.1.
12. Study conducted by an NGO in Bangalore estimated 100 million working children in India while the Baroda based Operation Research Group (ORG) indicates their number to be 44 million. (Report on the National Seminar on Implementation of Child Labour Projects, March 1997, p.1).
13. Ref.A This view was expressed by the State Representative of the UNICEF Ms. Doroithy Rozga. (The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, March 4, 1997) ; Ref.B A similar view is shared by former Advisor Planning Commission, M.V.S. Rao. He says "one of the serious problems affecting the preparation of parts of development plans for children is the prevailing lack of sufficient data on the nature and extent of children's problem" (p.42). He further states, "The census usually suffers from limitations of under-enumeration, especially of population without homes and population in the younger age group. Errors in age reporting are also there." (p.43) (Profile of the Child in India. Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, 1980).
14. Chaudhari, D.P. A Dynamic Profile of Child labour in India 1951-1991, ILO, New Delhi, 1996, Table 1-2 : p.92.

15. Report on National Seminar on Implementation of Child Labour Projects, March, 1997, p.2.
16. India's Street Children, Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses To The Problem, Draft Report, prepared by A.K. Srivastava, New Delhi, p.2.

The figures are tentative because none of the investigators have furnished details of the basis of their estimates.

17. Phillips, W.S.K., Street Children of Indore, National Labour Institute, 1992 p.10.
18. This was revealed by Mr. Jagannatha Shetty, Supreme Court Judge and President of the International Jurist Organization Asia, (ICCW New Bulletin, Vol. XXXIX, No.1, Jan-March, 1991, p.46).
19. Pandey, R. Street Children of India, Chugh Publications, Allahabad, 1991. p.15
20. Ref.A Nayeem, Sadar S.K. Keeping Conscience with Children's Children (My Name is Today, Vol. III, No. 1 & 2, Jan. 95 - June 95, pp. 56-57); Ref.B Raman Vasanthi, Child Labour in Tea Plantations of North-East India--An Extract (My Name is Today, Vol. II, No. 1 Jan. 94 - March 94, pp. 14-18); Ref.C Nandita Dev, To Hell and Almost Back (My Name is Today, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 94 - March 94, pp. 55-57); Ref.D National Labour Institute, Child Labour Series, 1992; Ref.E Pandey, R. Street Children of India. Chugh Publications, Allahabad, 1991; Ref.F Paniker, Street Children ; A Growing Urban Tragedy (ICCW, News Bulletin 1989, Vol.37, No.2, pp.3-8); Ref.G Report of NGO Workshop on Street and Working Children in Union Territory, July 16-17, 1987.
21. India's Street Children, Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses To The Problem, Draft Report, prepared by A.K. Srivastava, New Delhi. The Studies were conducted at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad, Poona, Indore, Kanpur, Vijayawada and Delhi.
22. Mehta, Jaya Concern for Child Labour ((My Name is Today, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 94 - March 94, pp. 10-11).

23. Ref.A Shroff, Neela They Are Our Children Too, The Vagrant Children's Project, unpublished paper; Ref.B Poornima Chikarmane, Street-Identity (Indian Journal of Social Work, Vol.57, No.1, January 1996, p.35).
24. Ref.A Mahendru, Bharti. Exploratory Study on the Institutionalized Abandoned Children 1987-88, Abstract, pp. 1-2 (ICCW News Letter, 1988, No.2, p.12); Ref.B P. Nangia Impact of Urbanization on Street Urchins : A Focus on Delhi. Paper presented in the National Workshop on Street-Children, New Delhi, August 29-30, 1988, pp. 3-5 ; Ref.C N.R. Hota, Abandoned Children in Orisa and their Rehabilitation. Paper presented in the Seminar on Rehabilitation of Abandoned children in Orissa, Bhubaneswar, October 8-9, 1988.
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26. National Labour Institute, Child Labour Series, 1992.
27. India's Street Children, Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses To The Problem, Draft Report, prepared by A.K. Srivastava, New Delhi.
28. *ibid.* p.16.
29. Ref.A Report of NGO Workshop on Street and Working Children in Union Territory, Delhi. July 16-17, 1987, p.42; Ref.B India's Street Children Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses To The Problem, Draft Report, prepared by A.K. Shrivastava, New Delhi, p.13; Ref.C Praveen Nangia, Quality of Life of Street and Working Children in Delhi (ICCW News Bulletin, March, 1989, pp. 10-11).
30. Pandey, R. Street Children of India, Chugh Publication, Allahabad, 1991, p.163
31. India's Street Children.
32. Singh, A.N. The Child Ragpickers, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 1996. pp. 37-38.
33. Pandey, R. Street Children of India, Chugh Publication, Allahabad, 1991. p.166.

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35. National Labour Institute, Child Labour Series, 1992.
36. Cited in Singh, A.N. op. cit., p.32.
37. Ref.A The Hindustan Times, November 13, 1996. Based on the study conducted in India during February, March, December 1995 and January 1996 ; Ref.B The Statesman, Calcutta, March 5, 1994 ; Ref.C ICCW News Letter 1988. No.2, p.31 ; Ref.D Indias Street Children, Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses to the Problem. Draft Report, prepared by A.K. Shrivastava, New Delhi.
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39. Mustafa, Mohd. and Onkar Sharma. Child Labour in India : A Bitter Truth. Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 187, 190.
40. Programme for Street Children -- A programme in Bangalore city by Fr. George Kollashany (Report of NGO Workshop on Street and Working Children in The Union Territory, Delhi, 16-17, July 1987, pp. 44-59).
41. *ibid.* p.6.
42. Mustafa and Sharma. op. cit., p. 187.
43. *ibid.* pp. 188-190.
44. *ibid.*, p.190.
45. Report of NGO Workshop on Street and Working Children. op. cit. p.9.

46. The SOS Children's villages of India have now established a national movement of family care for orphan and destitute children, entirely funded by sponsorship. The movement is slowly replacing old fashioned notion of institutionalization based on Children's Acts, which themselves need reform in many states. (Profile of Child in India, Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, pp. 1-16).
47. NGOs organised an "Apna Mela" sponsored by the UNICEF at Appu Ghar on Feb. 2nd 1995, for the street and working children of the Union Territory of Delhi. Over a thousand children participated in the programme where they were provided food and free access, (The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Feb. 2., 1995).
48. The All-India Street Children's Conference was held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Bombay) in mid Feb. 1996, to understand children's problems in ways perceived by them(The Statesman, Calcutta, March 5, 1994).
49. With the government having postponed its target dates for elimination of child labour from 2000 A.D. to 2005 A.D. and also with the Supreme Court directives in this direction, it was considered important to hold a National Convention of Child Labour in March, 97. In the convention, 1,000 child labourers participated from all over the country. (Convention of Child Labours, The Hindu, March 19, 1997).
50. An experiment in Karnataka to tackle problems of working children marked a milestone in the form of Panchayat Toofan (Children's Panchayat) project, preparations for which began in 1992 by Gramasharama. It is headed by B. Damodaracharya with the aim to put in place local self government to enable children to participate in decision-making (The Week, June 1, 1997, pp. 22-23).

Chapter IV

Who Are Street-Children ?

Over the past decade or so, Street Children have become highly visible on the streets of urban centers. Despite their visibility, relatively little is known about their life situations. The public image about street children is negative using such overlapping epithets as 'social nuisance' or 'juvenile delinquents' 'maladjusted children' 'abandoned children', etc. Therefore, those who attempt to work with street children face the dilemma of identifying street children from wider socio-economic group of working children. The Inter-NGO Programme for Street Children and Street Youth defined Street Children in the early 1980s with an emphasis on their 'place of dwelling' and their 'unprotected' state of life. (cf. p.2). The Defence for Children International (DCI) emphasized 'place' and 'occupation' of Street Children¹.

"Child workers are highly visible in many cities, not only at market place but on almost every street corner; from shoe-shine boys to newspaper or magazine hawkers, from cigarette vendors and all manner of peddlers or messenger boys, from waiters in virtually every restaurant or coffee house to helpers in all sorts of shops or establishments. They can be seen guarding parked cars, collecting garbage, transporting materials at construction sites, working at automobile repair shops or gas stations, sweeping floors in office buildings. Even more significantly, they work in many places less obvious to the public eyes, in the myriad of small factories or industries tucked into back streets or alleys of the cities, weaving carpets and performing all sorts of other tasks."

The National Workshop on Street Children (1988) suggested that all children who work on the street should be covered under the term street children.

"All children who work in the streets of urban areas without reference to the time they spend there or to the reasons for being there."²

In the same year, a detailed definition by UNICEF (cf.p.2) emphasized five major elements as follows:³

- (1) a place of congregation i.e., street ;
- (2) a certain set of working predicament ;
- (3) a set of living conditions ;
- (4) large amount of time spent in the streets ;
- (5) lack of protection and vulnerability to dangers and abuses.

All these definitions consider street children to be a homogeneous category, but in the wisdom of the U.K. Committee for UNICEF, not all street children are alike. Hence, the committee made an attempt to define Street Children on the basis of their relationship with their families (cf pp. 2-3). Following this criterion street children can be placed in two broad categories -- "Children on the street" and "Children of the street" (including abandoned children).

The above discussion clearly indicates, that there is no consensus concerning the definition of street children. For the purpose of the present study, the researcher has attempted to define Street-Children, by using the criteri. of relationship with the family (in its widest sense). The notion of relationship is further conceptua-
lised as follows :

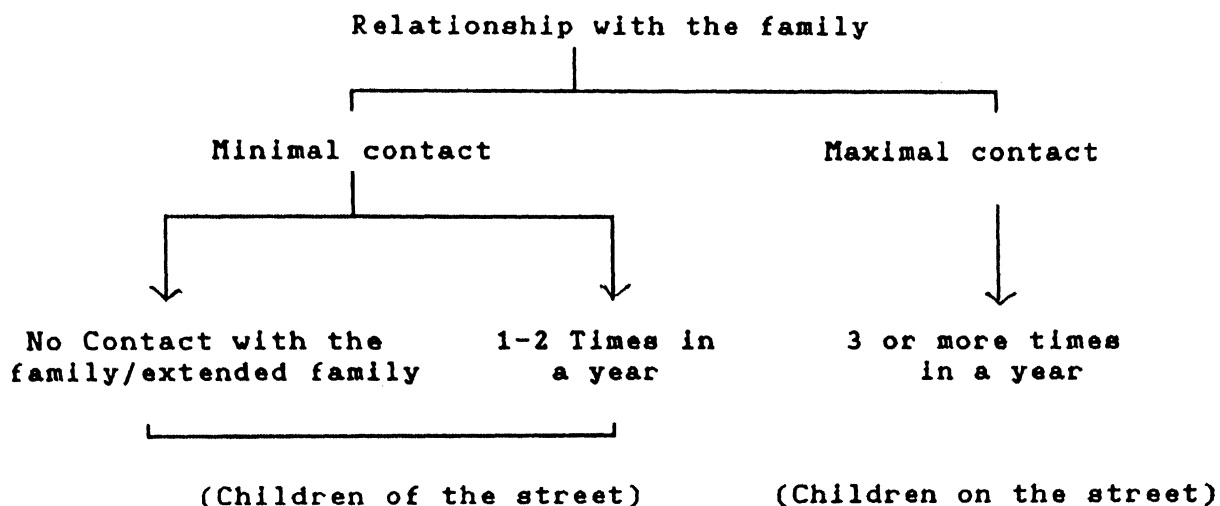


Fig.1: Relationship of street children with the family

In the present study, the definition of Street-Children reads as follows :

"Children (upto the age of sixteen years, "by appearance"), who live and work on the streets, have minimal relationship with the family/extended family, lack protection and are vulnerable to dangers and abuses."

Notes and References

1. National Workshop on Street Children, New Delhi, August 29-30, 1988, p.2.
2. *ibid.*
3. Pandey, R., Street Children of India, Chugh Publications, 1991, p.17.

Chapter - V

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Symbolic interactionism is an approach whose origins are to be found in the work of Mead (1927) at the University of Chicago, prior to Second World War. Mead's work on subjective meaning drew on pragmatist ideas to construct a social theory that stressed the communication of meaning in interaction. Pragmatism shared with Kantian philosophy, the idea that the meaning of the world depends upon its selection and interpretation by human beings. Its particular contribution was to stress that the selective attention that people gave to the world was rooted in their practical problems and purposes, and that possible meanings were constrained by the nature of the world itself. Herbert Blumer (1937) gave the name 'Symbolic Interactionism' to Mead's ideas.

Mead gave paramount importance to human society in his scheme of thought. He attempted to show that human group life was the essential condition for the emergence of consciousness, the mind, a world of objects, human beings as organisms possessing selves, and human conduct in the form of constructed acts. Thus, he reversed the traditional assumptions underlying philosophical, psychological and

sociological thought.¹

Human life, according to Mead, is a continual process of ongoing activity. Therefore, humans do not react in an automatic or mechanistic way to 'stimuli' or to objective circumstances, but enter into a process of 'definition' and 'interpretation'. This active involvement and intervention of people in their own circumstances requires practical knowledge/information, a fact that separates them from other animals. Thus, the starting point for sociological analysis must always be the meanings that objects have for individuals. The objects are not mere brute facts of the physical environment, but are mental constructions. Individuals identify objects in their environment as means for their actions, as consequences of their actions, or as supporting elements in the ongoing framework of their activities. The most important elements in interpretation are other people and their actions. As the significance of others is constructed through the use of symbols, social interaction is symbolically mediated: it is 'symbolic interaction'. Social interaction does not involve physical gestures, it involves their conversion into symbols. Behaviour becomes symbolic when people ascribe meaning to it and this meaning becomes the basis of their actions.²

Mead's picture of human being as an actor, asserts that human being has a self as a process and not as

structure and this self is constituted of a reflexive process i.e., acting toward or on itself. This reflexive process takes the form of the person making indications to himself i.e., noting things and determining their significance for their line of actions. As a result of this reflexivity, human behaviour is creative in character and it is not the simple product of external or internal causes. Therefore, human action is formed through a process of self interaction.³

Symbolic interactionism adopts a stance of methodological individualism, seeing the social process as an outcome of individual action. This does not rule out the possibility of collective action. The action of groups must be seen as the 'collective or concerted actions of individuals seeking to meet their life situations'. For this collective action, Blumer used the term "joint action" in place of Mead's term "Social act", which is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behaviour of the separate participants. This fitting together of the lines of conduct is done through the dual process of 'definition' and 'interpretation'. This dual process operates both to sustain established patterns of joint action and to open them upto transformation. A joint action is not common or same type of behaviour on the part of the participants, as each participant occupies a different position, acts from that position and engages in a separate and distinctive act.⁴

Although symbolic interactionists reject the idea of social structures, they nevertheless see social action as being organised in relation to social institutions. According to Mead, an institution is 'a common response on the part of all members of the community to a particular situation'. It is the 'organized form of group or social activity'. Institutions, then, are general phenomena. The institution of property, for instance, involves a generalized attitude towards its maintenance by the members of the society. Central to the idea of a social institution, is the idea of the social reaction of others to an action. This organized social response, is not an external factor in individual action, but it is a directly internalized feature of action. While taking the attitudes of specific others to their actions and intended actions, individuals also take the attitude of the Generalized Other.

"The organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalised other'. The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community".⁵

Taking cognisance of attitudes of the Generalised Other, occurs through a process of socialization or education, in which people take over the organized response of people in general and thus, become able to respond to themselves in the same way as the majority of the other members of their society. Through this internalization of the attitudes of

the Generalized Other, the mind is structured, socially and the person becomes a 'member' of society.

Pragmatism was not the only school of philosophy to generate a theory of action and subjective meaning. Similar ideas were derived from Phenomenology by Alfred Schutz, whose work was taken up by Peter Berger during the 1950s and 1960s. During 1960s, the nature of deviance was central to the massive growth of interest in symbolic interactionism, due to the work of Becker (1963). Becker stressed that deviance should not be seen as an attribute of individuals, but as a definition or 'label' that is applied to the actions of individuals by the others with whom they interact. The others who are the audience of actions, judge individuals in terms of their own values and norms, in terms of their own preferred rules of behaviour. Becker further says that 'social groups create deviance by making the rules and by applying those norms, rules to particular people'.⁶ Mere deviation from a rule is not sufficient for someone to become publicly defined as a 'deviant' -- that is, as 'thief', as 'delinquent' or whatever. Deviance should not be seen as a breakdown of existing structure but as an inability to mobilize action effectively in the face of a given situation. As a self image is shaped by its reflection in the attitudes of others, the social reaction -- an act of labelling or stigmatization -- is likely to lead people to re-assess their motivation and identity. As more and more

people act towards an individual in terms of their public definition as a deviant, so the individual will see himself as being a deviant.⁷

Social reaction may be informal or formal in nature. Informal reaction is through the attitudes of family, friends and public opinion. Formal reaction may involve the intervention of public agencies like police or other agents of social control. This collective reaction of official agencies, may result in individual's imprisonment, hospitalization or 'treat' in some other way, and it may lead to closing-off of opportunities of development to them. Under these circumstances, people are likely to be forced into 'career deviance': they become locked-in to deviant sub-worlds and manytimes find it difficult to lead a normal life.

This view of relationship between social action and self-image depends heavily on the work of Goffman (1959), who elaborated Mead's work on the self. According to Goffman, social life must be seen as a 'theatrical performance' in which people give creative interpretations to their 'roles'. They employ particular 'props' and scenery to support the impression of their self, they intend to convey to others⁸.

5.1 METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

According to Interactionists, the study of action has to be made from the position of the actor since action is forged by the actor out of what he perceives, interprets, and judges. Many interactionists have based their methodological approach on this ideology, and Denzin is one of them. Denzin (1970) presented a summary view of interactionist theory and methodology in an influential text.⁹ He says that methods cannot be neutral instruments because they define how the topic will be symbolically constituted and how the researcher will adopt a particular definition of self vis-a-vis the data. Interactionist theory is concerned with the creation and change of symbolic orders via social interaction. Interactionists view research as a symbolic order based on interactions. Denzin points out that, "Methodology... represents the principal ways the sociologist acts on his environment".¹⁰

In the exposition of the interactionist model, he presents five methodological principles as follows :

Table 3: Methodological Principles of Interactionism

| <u>Principle</u> | <u>Implication</u> |
|--|--|
| 1. Relating symbols and interaction | Showing how meanings arise in the context of behaviour |
| 2. Taking the actors' point of view. | Learning everyday conceptions of reality; interpreting them through sociological perspectives. |
| 3. Studying the 'situated' character of interaction. | Gathering data in naturally-occurring situations. |
| 4. Studying process as well as stability. | Examining how symbols and behaviour vary over time and setting. |
| 5. Generalising from descriptions to theories. | Attempting to establish universal interactive propositions. |

Source : Adapted from Silverman (1985:102)

Denzin suggests Participant Observation as the research methodology most appropriate to interactionist perspective. Such a method involves sharing in people's lives while attempting to learn about their world. For Denzin, the way it (Participant Observation) is used will depend on the role carved out by the researcher, varying from a 'complete participant' to the 'complete observer'. Participant Observation embodies the five principles as set out in the Table No.1. It involves taking the viewpoint of those studied, understanding the situated character of

interaction, viewing social processes over time, and can encourage attempts to develop formal theories grounded in first-hand data. He further points out that "the observer is not bound in his field work by pre-judgements about the nature of his problem, by rigid data-gathering devices, or by hypothesis."¹¹

Participant Observation involves using multiple sources of data as part of the methodology. "As a field strategy, it combines document analysis, respondent and informant interviewing, direct participation and observation and introspection." Denzin indicates further that Participant Observation is not without difficulties. Firstly, it focuses on the present and may blind the observer to important events that occurred before his entry on the scene. Secondly, confidantes or informants in a social setting may be entirely unrepresentative of the less open participant. Thirdly, the observer may change the situation just by his presence. Finally, the observer may 'go native', identifying so much with the participants that, he cannot remember how he found out or articulate the principles underlying what he is doing.¹²

For interactionists, Interviews are essentially about symbolic interaction. Interviews are social events based on mutual participant observation, which produces a 'focused interaction'. The context of the production of a

recognisable interview is intrinsic to understanding any data that are obtained. The practical implication is that most interactionists tend to reject pre-scheduled standardised interviews and to prefer open-ended interviews. Denzin offers three reasons, for this preference:

1. It allows respondents to use their 'unique ways of defining the world'.
2. It assumes that no fixed sequence of questions is suitable to all respondents.
3. It allows respondents to 'raise important issues not contained in the schedule'¹³.

Denzin further lists a number of 'problems' which can 'distort interviewees' responses. These are :

- a) Respondents possessing different interactional roles from the interviewer.
- b) The problem of 'self-presentation', especially in the early stages of the interview.
- c) The problems of 'volatile', 'fleeting' relationships to which respondents have little commitment and so 'can fabricate tales of self that belie the actual facts'.
- d) The difficulty of penetrating private worlds of experience.
- e) The relative status of interviewer and interviewee.

- f) The 'context' of the interview (e.g. home, work, hospital).¹⁴

Symbolic interactionism is found specifically suitable to the study of underprivileged and deviant groups. For the present study, this particular theory and its methodological techniques are used.

5.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Using the theoretical framework outlined earlier, the major objective of the study is to uncover the ordinary, everyday world of experience of the Street-Children. More specifically, the study purports to find out :

1. How a meaningful world is constructed, i.e, the world of everyday life, the world in which Street-Children live.
2. How Street-Children organize action in relation to social institutions like agencies of social control.
3. How Street-Children define and interpret the world and align their activities with other street children and the adult world.

4. How social reaction affects the self-image of Street-Children.
5. How Street-Children collectively negotiate an understanding of the social order that governs their actions.

5.3 METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In field experience, the researcher has used the notion of Denzin's Participant Observation (cf pp.66-67). It was difficult to be a complete participant because of the age and socio-economic background of the researcher (which obviously is different from that of the group under study). Therefore, the researcher opted to be a 'complete observer', instead. In the present study, Observation is the most relevant technique of data collection.

Since in symbolic interactionism, the process of interpretation and definition of action is central to human interaction, it becomes necessary to supplement the Observation method with Interview. Moreover, the study of action from the position of the actor makes it difficult to rely on observation alone. Therefore, to ascertain how children perceive, interpret, and judge the world of 'objects' interview method has been used along with the method of Observation.

The use of Interview method in the study of street children is also found to counteract the danger of any 'objective' approach that might creep in, in the process of observation. The researcher may inadvertently substitute the views of the actor (Street-Children) with her own. However, this does not mean that the Interview method is foolproof and without any limitation.

The researcher found some problems in ascertaining responses from Street-Children. These are similar to the problems enlisted by Denzin (cf pp. 68-69). Since Street Children lack stability, the reliability of their statements is very difficult to ascertain. Children also 'fabricate tales of self that belie the actual facts.' 'Volatile' and 'fleeting' social relationships which they encounter, create suspicion in their minds regarding the identity of the researcher. All this created problems in using the Interview method.¹⁵

5.3.1 Selecting Reference Populations According to Contexts of Social Networking/Situated Character of Interaction

According to symbolic interactionism, different contexts of social networking provide different means of interpreting the reality. Three contexts or "situated character of interaction" (Principle 3 of Denzin cf. p.66) were chosen to understand Street-Children.

The first of these "contexts" is the Kanpur Railway Station. The choice of this 'context' does not merely correspond to empirical reality, but it is also logically valid considering the fact that large number of children enter their "careers" as Street-Children from the neighboring villages and towns traveling by train.

Interactive theory, understands not only the 'situated' but also the 'processual character' of action (Principle 4, cf p. 66). Interactionists therefore, study stages in "moral careers" from "novice" to "old hand". In view of this Principle, it is necessary to choose the second "context of social network" as the Observation Home. Preliminary fieldwork shows that the child who is a Street Child at the moment may be a resident of Observation Home in the next few hours (if he is caught by public agencies like the police). Or, a resident of Observation Home may again become a Street-Child in the very near future (if there is no legal charge against him or any member of his family does not turn up to take him back).

The third "context" is the Transport Nagar situated in Western Kanpur. The Transport Nagar incidentally also provides a true "context" of abandonment. In 1992, riots took place in Babupurwa, adjacent to Transport Nagar. Many

children became orphans. Government aid was provided to them for a short time. Its discontinuance led children to eventually work as labourers/assistants in Transport Nagar.

Notes and References

1. Blumer, Herbert; "Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead", in Sociological Theory, Ed. by Waller L. Wallace; Heinemann, London, 1996, p. 234.
2. Scott, John. Sociological Theory. Edward Elgar, 1995, pp. 101-102.
3. Wallace, op. cit., pp. 234-235.
4. *ibid.* pp. 239-240
5. Scott, op. cit., p. 105.
6. *ibid.* pp. 100-106.
7. *ibid.* p. 107.
8. *ibid.*
9. Silverman, David. : Qualitative Methodology and Sociology. Gower, England, 1985, pp. 101-105.
10. *ibid.* p. 101.
11. *ibid.* p. 104.
12. *ibid.* pp. 104-105.
13. *ibid.* pp. 162.
14. *ibid.* p. 163.
15. Barker, Felicia Knaul; "How to Interview children Who live or Work in the Streets", First Call for Children, 1993. No.1, p.6. In this article the interview method and different approaches to interview are discussed that can make data collection easier from working children who live in especially difficult circumstances. A few important insights and techniques are : introduce yourself, personalize the interview, provide reference points, allow time for an exercise break, and make the interview participatory.

Chapter VI

SITUATED CHARACTER OF INTERACTION

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the world of Street-Children from their own point of view. For this purpose, as mentioned earlier, three Social Contexts -- the Kanpur Railway Station, Observation Home and Transport Nagar have been selected.

6.1.1 Social Context-1 : Railway Station

At the Railway Station, Street-Children were mostly from neighbouring towns and villages. They had come to Kanpur by rail and bus. Travelling by rail is more common because it is easier to be a ticketless traveller in trains than in buses. The former also has the added advantage of providing the children* an opportunity to camouflage their identity by mingling with the already working children in trains -- as sweepers, vendors or even as musicians pleading for money. If however, by sheer ill-fate, they are identified as a 'runaway', it is easier to dodge railway authorities and get down at the nearest station. It seems therefore, that children at the Railway Station did not have any specific choice of a destination. The choice was governed by such filmy grounds as liking for the station setup or the seeming glamour of the city as seen from the station.

* Where ever the term children is used it must be read as Street-Children.

Even the duration of the stay at the station is undecided. The initial experience at a particular destination is a very important determining factor. If the child faces a congenial environment (in terms of friendly adults and children), he stays back. Often the chances of such an environment are dim. According to a police (Government Railway Police -- GRP) estimate only 10 out of 25 children who arrive daily at the Kanpur Railway Station are able to face the initial 'shock' of an alien and hostile environment.

In Kanpur, majority of the children (20 out of 25) were from nearby places in Uttar Pradesh like Aligarh, Blithor, Banda, Rasoolabad and Fatehpur. But there are instances where some children were found to travel from more distant places. One child even came all the way from Nepal. In general, these children had left their families due to what they thought was a situation of deprivation, neglect, ill-treatment and overstrain due to work pressures. But there were others also who evinced a strong pre-disposition for independent living. Sometimes, having made the departure from home, the child had very few options left to reverse his decision to stay in the street. During field work, the reasons for leaving home were given as follows :

- o Child A had departed on personal grounds. Soon thereafter, he heard of his whole village having been

submerged in the flood waters. This natural calamity became a governing factor in his stay on the street.

- o Child B's parents used to beat him black and blue. Parental abuse became the decisive factor in his departure. Refusal to work was the reason for parent's anger.
- o Child C and D also faced the same situation at home. In the first case the child was beaten by his father, as he did not handover the full amount of money earned on a particular day. He had purchased a toy for himself, instead. Another child was beaten and forced by his mother to leave the home because she did not want him to lead a life of deprivation. She could see a better future for him, outside the home.
- o In case of child X, the death of his mother almost rendered him orphan and homeless. The state of homelessness drew him to the urban streets.
- o A strong pre-disposition to lead an independent living, motivated child Y to the street life.
- o A similar feeling of independence brought child Z to the street. He hopes to live a comfortable and fulfilling life on the street.

Children at the Railway Station generally belong to a low socio-economic strata. As shown earlier, some have been abandoned due to circumstances, while a few have voluntarily left home to enjoy their independence. Most of the

children, the researcher met, were of the age group 10-16.¹ Only two were younger, probably in the age bracket 8-10 years. Most of them were Hindus and of low castes.

To flee from home, summer seems to be the right time. It is easier to adapt to the weather, especially during the nights. Inadequate clothing and unfriendly weather can make the initial stay at a destination tough during winters and rainy season. Even if the child has adequate clothes for winter, it is difficult to keep a vigil on one's possessions unless one has found an adequate 'shelter', on the street.

The immediate need of the children on reaching the Railway Station, is survival, lodging and food and this implies work. Children do not have many options as they neither have skills, money, nor do they enjoy people's trust. The only option is to work as an unlicensed Coolie or as a bell-boy in a dhaba (small way-side restaurant). The initial experience of being in Railway Station was reported as follows :

"when I reached the station, I did not know what to do. Other children managed to buy food for me. They suggested that I work as Coolie as they were also doing the same for their survival. They also told me the tricks of living -- how to negotiate with the customer,

how to react when any individual or police official makes an enquiry, etc."

- o Another boy X said : "After reaching the station I did not know where to go and what to do. I had some money so I went to a dhaba and had food there. As it was fairly dark, I asked the owner to let me sleep there. Next morning he enquired about me and offered me the job of a dish-washer on daily wages and, thus, I started working as a 'boy' in a dhaba."
- o "As soon as I reached the station, I was caught by the police and was sent to the Observation Home and from there to the Juvenile Jail. After six months, when I was released, I returned to the station. By that time I had learnt a lot about street-life and started working at a dhaba as a bell-boy."
- o "In the begining, I worked in a tea-shop for some time. I was beaten severely whenever I asked for wages. I received punishment for minor mistakes committed during work hours. I left that job and started working as a Coolie."

Children are not merely exploited but they are exploiters in turn, too. The Railway Station provides ample opportunity to exploit the vulnerability of travellers. During field work, the researcher found children earning money by occupying seats in the train stationed at the outer platform. When the train arrives at the platform they "sell"

the occupied seats and take money from travellers who desperately look for a place in the crowded compartments.

Children beg and plead for left-over food from travellers and catering establishments in the station. Long distance trains (with pantry cars attached to them) also help them with leftover food which they distribute amongst themselves. Sometimes, however, a vigilant GRP makes life difficult for them. The platforms are 'cleaned' and they must of necessity flee to take refuge elsewhere. The railway-wagons and coaches stationed outside the platform provide them shelter during summers, chilly winter nights and during rainy seasons, too.

An interesting feature of the child's existence on the Railway Station is that he ceases to hold the law makers as a symbol of awe and fear, a symbol which is prevalent for the wider society and which helps to sustain obedience to law. This is because of their routine, casual interaction with the police on the platform in the form of an 'unfocused interaction' (general interaction, enquiries and help in settling disputes with other children and adults). This 'unfocused interaction' erases the fear and bridges the gap between children and police. By virtue of their daily presence in the same 'social situation' on the Railway Station, they become friendly towards each other.

The unfocused interaction gives way to a 'focused' one during occasional 'raids' conducted by the GRP.²

Raids as Focused Interaction

These occasions are commonly programmed in advance; they possess an agenda of activity, and provide a specification of negative sanctions for the improper conduct of being on the platform/street. These are occasions for 'focused interaction' involving the Street-Children and the police officials. This is reflected in a transformed body symbolism -- the frown, waiving of the threatening 'Lathi' (stick), all of which convey a message to the children that the GRP is 'on duty' to take them into custody at the Observation Home (situated at Kidwai Nagar).

However, almost daily association with Street-Children often makes the GRP sympathetic to them even on occasions of 'raid'. They themselves become informers of their 'secret and sudden' raids, the day and timing of their activities. This action of GRP has multidimensional effects. It builds 'trust' which surprisingly co-exists with suspicion and doubt in the minds of the Street-Children. In trusting relationships children often ask the GRP personnel to intervene in their peer group conflicts. They also take the assistance of GRP to obtain food from the ^{Pantry} cars of long distance trains. This clearly indicates that the

police for an average Street-Child symbolises both awe and friendship. During routine interaction, Street-Children and Police become a part of the same 'social milieu' of the Railway Station.

Some of the above cooperative gestures from the agents of social control do not indicate complete congeniality of relationship between the two. For instance, gaining permission to take left-over food from ~~pantry~~ cars, for stay on or near the platform and to work as unofficial Coolie and seeking assistance in settling peer-group disputes -- all involve a price. Street-Children are expected to return these favours in terms of menial work.³ This, in turn, erodes the faith and trust of children towards the law makers. Children become aware of their 'exploitation' but bear this with perseverance as they realise that their networking with the agents of social control is extremely indispensable for their survival. Thus, children live and adjust to their environment. During fieldwork, there were frequent expressions of anger, helplessness and use of abusive language for the police-staff. The following statements express their ill-feelings :

- o "These men do not help us selflessly. They often call us for some work at the Thana (Police Station). We are asked to clean the thana but no wages are paid for the work."

- o "They ask us to bring tea, eatables and run small errands. They also assign us work at their residence and we have to do so without any failure."
- o "We have to do whatever they dictate, otherwise they beat us. Often we receive beating without any reason. What can we do? We do not have any one to whom we could complain."

Street-Children at the Railway Station form a somewhat loosely integrated group, in terms of membership. Continuous addition and deletion of members take place due to various factors operative on them. But, however volatile the group may be, it is almost always cohesive and cooperative. Sharing of food, money, clothes and bedding is common in the group. This spirit of cooperation safeguards new, unfortunate or sick members who may not be in a position to earn on a particular day. During fieldwork a few children stated :

- o "We do not want to earn much, because if we earn more, police or local "dadas" would snatch the money from us. Whenever we have money we spend it on our friends who in turn, help us in times of crisis."
- o "I was scared of police so I could not earn like other children. They helped me in getting food, and thus I survived."
- o "When I fall ill other children help me, so whenever I have money I spend it on them."

- o "I spend all my earnings on the same day otherwise there is fear of someone taking it away from me."

The Group spirit is most evident in 'theft' as a collective, organised "earning strategy".

Theft as Collective Action

Theft may be considered as a 'joint activity', in which a group of Street-Children participate. Usually, the youngest child approaches a tired, dozing traveller and kicks him to check whether he is awake or asleep. If awake, the traveller treats that knock as unintentional and does not bother, but if he is found asleep, the child removes the possessions of the traveller. Suppose, the child does not succeed in this venture, he risks getting a beating from the traveller. Sometimes however, it may be only a warning to a 'tender child'. If the child is successful, he passes on those stolen articles to other children (who are present nearby) to keep them. They flee away from the scene with remarkable speed and congregate at a pre-determined place to distribute the booty. Generally, the powerful/eldest child in the group gets the largest share. Others do not feel deprived. For instance, during interview a child mentioned:

- o "Manytimes, I engage in stealing. Though the return is paltry, the whole process is thrilling. Money is inconsequential."

'Theft' may involve not only members of the peer group but also adult members -- local 'dadas' and other 'sympathetic' members of the neighbourhood. Often involvement of the local dada's in children's organization, changes their behaviour pattern which progressively turns a'social. A case in point is theft from Postal Department. In the month of September/October 1994, the Postal Department in Kanpur received many complaints of 'missing' articles from parcels waiting to be despatched. An enquiry revealed that the Postal Department employees were sympathetic towards Street Children and often permitted them to spend winter nights in the office (cuddled between parcels) to save them from cold in the open. But, these children took advantage of the situation and stole many articles from the parcels. This made the GRP more vigilant during the winter months.

An important feature of the life on street is that it can not sustain greed and aspiration for money beyond what is required for daily survival. Team effort is required not only in earning one's bread but also for saving for the rainy day. But it is difficult to find a safe place for depositing one's saving. Belongings of a whole team are kept in a wooden box which is chained to a pole. The key to the box is kept by the senior most child, who is also the most powerful one. Generally however, saving is not a preferred option in the lives of Street-Children. The team

is often a volatile one and full trust can not be reposed on members, however close they are. It becomes imperative to spend the money on the very day it is earned. Paradoxically enough, money is always spent in the company of one's peer group/team members or shared with those who are either ill, weak or unlucky to afford the necessities for the day. This benevolent act improves the social image of the child in the group.

Children at the Railway Station also earn their livelihood by working at various dhabas. A job at the dhaba also fulfills their two basic requirements for food and lodging. They feel quite at ease acting as a dishwasher or as a bell-boy. Initially they are given daily wages which are later consolidated into monthly wages depending on the duration of stay with a particular employer. Food and lodging costs are often deducted from the monthly salaries. Various experiences at dhaba were reported as follows :

- o "In the beginning, I started working at a dhaba but I was not paid properly. Later on I left that job and started working at another dhaba. There too, the owner deducted an amount of Rs. 5/= when I broke a plate. My daily wage was only Rs. 10/="
- o Another boy X reported : "My father brought me to this dhaba and negotiated the salary with the owner. I only get food and a place to sleep. I do not know how much my father gets every month."

- o "In the beginning I worked for Rs. 10/= per day as a dish-washer. Then, the owner suggested work on monthly basis of Rs. 200/=. When at the end of the month I asked for money he beat me mercilessly and gave me a sum of Rs. 75/=. I left that job and came here. This employer is good and never cheats me."

Life at dhaba, though familiar is often quite tedious. Children often get up early in the morning (around 4 or 5 a.m.) to lit the stove, wash dishes and make the necessary preparations for culinary activities. Their work keeps them engaged through the day and it is often past midnight when they retire to bed. Children are left with so little time for themselves that once they have joined the dhaba, there is little opportunity to go job-hunting elsewhere. The continuous grind of work keeps them on their toes, almost bonded to their employer. It is precisely with this motive that the employer provides them night-shelter. This also makes it easy to recall them to work at odd hours. Children depicted their work conditions thus :

- o "There is no holiday for us. I get up at 4 or 5 a.m. and start working. Generally, I go back to bed very late--often at mid-night."
- o "Our work demands a lot of labour as we have to get up early in the morning and toil till late at night."

The dhaba affords the child hardly any holiday, since they are open throughout the week. But the child does manage to take a day off (which results in deduction of his salary) to watch movies. These are also occasions to exchange notes with other children on the Station. These exchanges may result in switching job from dhaba to Station as a 'Coolie' and vice-versa.

Future Plans

As majority of these children lead a very uncertain and unstable life, they do not have clear vision of future, and are mostly fatalistic in their attitudes. In response to query about their future plans, a few children said :

- o "I do not think about it, it is fate which may make me 'something'."
- o "I do not know about the future but want to become rich quickly like film heroes."
- o "I do not dream about the future. The only thing required in life is sufficient food and that is the only concern for worry to me."
- o "I like to travel by train and wish to become an engine-driver in future."

Education

Illiteracy is one of the common characteristics found in most of the children as they belong to a class where fulfillment of basic needs(food, clothing and shelter) is the pivotal point of all of their economic activities. Schooling and education remain beyond their dreams. When children were asked whether they want to study, their immediate reaction was :

- o "If I go to study then what will I eat ?"
- o "I am not interested in studies as my school-going age is over."
- o "When it is so difficult to get sufficient food then how do you expect me to go to school ? Earlier, I wanted to study but now I have lost interest. My only concern is to get food in order to survive."
- o "I do not wish to study. I only want to earn my bread and to go to movies."
- o "Due to poverty, my parents could not send me to school. At present, I have lost interest in studies. The constant worry is about food."
- o "I am aware of the facts of life and know well that for the poor like us, there is no opportunity to study. If I go to study, then who will earn food for me ?"

6.1.2 Social Context-2 : The Observation Home

The children who are confined to the Observation Home⁴ (OH) are generally children picked up from the Railway Station. As mentioned earlier, the GRP conducts 'raids' from time to time as part of the 'social cleansing' of the platform from pick-pocketeers, thieves, delinquents, beggars and ticketless passengers. This process is a routine affair, often conducted at intermittent intervals to meet official targets. On such 'raids' coincidentally enough, the 'new entrant' to the street life is picked up. The child who does not have previous experience of such events, the skill of dodging the police and who has no ~~confidence~~^{trustworthiness} informers, finds himself lodged in the OH.

Following governmental stipulations the child is confined at the OH for a maximum period of ninety days during which the authorities try to contact his families/relatives. In those cases where the child is not claimed by family members, he is released from the Home or sent to the Juvenile Jail for a specified period. In both the cases, the child is eventually on the streets. There is therefore, a possibility of encountering the same child in the street and again in the OH. It is this interesting process which made it imperative to study the Observation Home as part of the study of the life of Street-Children. This was also revealed during interaction, as a few children stated:

- o "This is the second time that I am caught in 'raid' but I know that they will release me soon. Next time I will remain a little more conscious so that I am not caught again."
- o "I am caught for the first time, In the beginning I was very scared here but now I am O.K. I am not sure when they will leave me but after release I will go back to my place."

The OH lodges children of different age groups, ranging from 8-16 years. Almost all children interviewed here relate their existence on street to a momentary decision of leaving their home as a result of extreme deprivation in their home -- both physical (food) and emotional (affection). An impulsive action is often made strong by previous knowledge of other children who had run away.

On reaching the station, all of them had confronted a feeling of hunger, uneasiness and despair. But they braved it all--hostility of adults and children, the inclement weather, and resisted all temptations to return home. They were, it seems, in the midst of a battle which had to be faced. But there was no specific choice made in favour of picking up Kanpur as their new 'home'. They did not know the details of the city in which they found themselves nor, had they heard of it before. Some even thought they would

move ahead in case they did not like it. A few (younger kids below, 11 years old) however, seemed visibly shattered and wanted to go back to their family.

- o "I want to go back. You ask them to write to my parents. They will definitely come to take me back. I feel scared and do not want to stay here."
- o "I was going along with my father to my Aunty's place. On the way, my father got down at a station to drink water and the train moved on. At the next station, I too got down from the train. There two people promised me to send me back to my residence, but they cheated me and lodged me here. Please help me and send me back."

Many others showed strong resilience for street life.

They stated :

- o "I do not want to go home, I am happy here (Street)."
- o "It is better to die than go back home. When I return home, the same story would be repeated again (story of abuse, poverty, etc)."
- o "My home is like hell. I do not want to even have any contact with my family members."
- o "Where will I go ? I do not remember the name of my village."
- o "I can not recall happy times. I can only recall periods of starvation and beating. My only hope was

getting away from home. How can you expect me to go back to such a place ?”

The OH provides a 'Social Occasion' bound in place and time. It also provides the shattered child food and shelter. However, it does not provide what the child immediately needs -- a sense of comfort and warmth. The rather prolonged interviewing session by the Probation Officer often unnerves the child ; some even broke down during the process.

The OH at Kidwai Nagar is literally a transit centre. It is ill equipped and faces shortage of space and funds. A meagre sum of Rs. 312/= per child, per month -- is all that is received by the authorities of the Home from the state government to meet nutrition, accommodation and hygienic requirements of the children. Apparently, it seems to have the required infrastructure for recreational needs of the children like a T.V. set, radio, etc. However, these facilities are seldom operational for the child. The staff members of the home like to economise on their use to cut expenditure on energy. They may even use the same infrastructural resources to their own advantage. This not only opens up to the child, a vision of a world of exploiting adults but also confirms the realisation that exploitation is universal, -- outside or within the Home. Their resentment was expressed in the following words :

- o "Television is always in an inoperational condition. (Mockingly) They say it is not in a working order."
- o "Only one film is shown to us during the week and then the T.V. is again shifted to the manager's room."
- o "They (authorities) blame the government for giving poor funds and express their inability to pay electricity bills."

At the Home, children are expected during confinement to help the authorities in the activities of maintenance (cleaning) and kitchen and for this purpose they are divided into groups. Each group is assigned some work for a fixed period of time and after that, responsibilities are reshuffled. Usually, children prefer to get involved in the kitchen because it provides them opportunity for some extra food. It also helps them to pick up skills which they know would help them once they are released. Involvement in activities of the kitchen and subsequent access to food also ensures their superiority and power over other children. During interviews a few children said :

- o "I like doing work in kitchen because it helps me in getting the food I want."
- o "After being released from Home, I will work in a dhaba, so I want to learn skills in the kitchen. In future, I want to even own a dhaba."
- o "The stronger among us or those who are liked by the

staff-members, are always assigned work in the kitchen. Those boys then create problem for us and deprive us of sufficient quantity of food."

Stay in the OH affords a simultaneous experience of conflict and cooperation. Exposure to conflicting situations are many. First and foremost is the experience in the kitchen where the child is made to work hard. However, he rarely protests. He quickly learns that the chances of retaliation are extremely few because it may result in abrupt discontinuance of food.

Conflicts also arise with other children due to their different biographical contexts. Children are of different age groups, different ethnic backgrounds and linguistic affiliations. Often there is no common characteristic except the life circumstances that bind them together. They are all Street Children. The 'melting pot' of new faces and culture is disastrous for a child for whom the confinement at the OH is part of the initial experience of the life on street. But there are many others who have been in the OH earlier, were released and subsequently nabbed again. For these 'experienced children' the reality at OH is not very harsh. They know that life in the OH -- the life of confinement would soon be followed by a life of freedom unless they are unlucky to be caught again. This must be avoided by learning the 'tricks of the game' as fast as possible.

6.1.3 Social Context-3 : The Transport Nagar

In 1992, the city of Kanpur witnessed a riot which originated at Babupurwa, a Muslim locality where majority of residents worked as unskilled labourers or mechanics in the adjacent Transport Nagar. During the riots, many people were killed. As a result, a large number of children were rendered homeless and were sent to the orphanage. Others were encouraged to stay back with their kins. This was facilitated by government assistance to riot-hit families. A few children preferred to rough it all alone. However, their incapability (due to tender age and lack of resourcefulness) compelled them to stay with the extended family members.

When the emotionally loaded post-riot phase got over, the scars of the wound began to heal. Government and non-government grants were also gradually withdrawn or discontinued. The trauma of riots was now felt once again by the children. A large number of them were once again on the streets despite having some contacts with kins.

Children who started their lives on the street, lived and worked in familiar set-up. Most of them were acquainted with the Transporters who were former employers of their deceased parents. During interaction a few children expressed their views as :

- o "My father used to work with the present employer. When he expired, I started working for him."
- o "Despite large promises, the government did not give us grants. So I left my 'area' and stayed at the Railway Station for a few days. But soon I came back and started working here."

Street-Children in Transport Nagar lead a fairly disciplined life. Their working day begins very early -- often at the crack of the dawn. No personal preparation is necessary in terms of food or appearance since there is hardly any provision for the same. When, at night they are released from work, it is again too late to look after matters of personal hygiene because the supply of water at public taps is over by then. As a result, these children appear to be dirty, dusty and greasy all the time. A child said :

"Our duty hours are so long that we hardly get an opportunity to take bath and wash our clothes. When we return from work, water is not available at the roadside tap."

Finding a shelter at night is not a serious problem for Street-Children at Transport Nagar. They stay with the transporters who allow them this privilege in lieu of an

of any exigency, the child is expected to alert the employer. The latter often encourages children to stay back at night since most loading operations take place in the evening and during late hours at night to facilitate an early departure of trucks in the next morning. Children provide help in loading operations even when no adult help is available at odd hours. Thus starts a life of give and take, a life of stable and often enduring relationship with adult members.

Street-Children share warm and affectionate relationship with their employers. The transporters were sympathetic to their needs and gave them food and money, over and above their wages. Clients of the employers also rewarded them in lieu of small favours like running errands. During festivals they were well looked after and given new clothes. Children in Transport Nagar seemed to exude a feeling of confidence and security. They were more articulate and seemed to enjoy their work. This is reflected in positive attitudes towards both work and employer and adult colleagues at work. A few stated :

- o "My employer is nice. He is a Muslim. He gives me one set of clothes on Id alongwith one Kilogram packet of sweets."
- o "My employer is not so liberal but even then he gives me one set of clothes and sometimes five or ten rupees,

or 1/2 Kilogram of sweet packet."

Not too much, however, should be interpreted about children's living and working conditions. Children complained of fatigue and aching muscles due to frequent use of heavy tools and equipments. They narrated their experience thus :

- o "I am very young (8 years old), so I find it difficult to handle those tools. By evening, I feel pain in my shoulders, palms and fingers."
- o "Big tools and equipments are used for trucks, and being a child, I often find it difficult to carry and manage those equipments. Manytimes, I get hurt or suffer small cuts. Heavy tools also create pain in my hands."

The seemingly warm relationship with the employer is also at times a matter of convenience rather than of spontaniety. Employing child labour can be potentially risky to the Transporters. Children, by virtue of their small and flexible physique, can hide themselves behind the large wheels of vehicles and thus, escape being noticed by the vigilant night-guards. They often engage in petty thefts. The employers therefore like to keep the children in good spirits. Sometimes, they (employers) themselves handover to them metallic spare parts and any such article which may not have much value to them. These fetch addi-

tional money to the children and also foster a feeling of mutually affectionate relationship.⁵

Children, by selling metallic scraps often learn early, the monetary worth of many mechanical spare parts gadgets and equipments. They also learn to be alert 'scavengers' of iron spares. During the early hours of dawn, they scavenge the whole area, armed with a magnet in hand and look for any metallic item which may have been inadvertently misplaced or left by the mechanics at work during the previous day.

Children therefore, have to be monitored continuously at work. Occasions demanding scolding and physical thrashing are frequent. Yet, they bear all this in good spirit. They value the skills that they learn and face the challenge work throws upon them. During interaction children said :

- o "I enjoy working because it helps me to learn certain skills which would ultimately help me to improve my earnings."
- o "Many times, I find it difficult to handle tools. I find myself incapable of doing work like Bhaiya and Chacha."

Although seemingly involved in arduous work, children organize their lives to have adequate leisure, too. Cycling, or even a ticket to a movie-theatre makes them happy. Sometimes, an elaborate bath can also be a fun-time in the company of other children. Fun and frolic, quarrels and physical exchange of blows among children are interrupted by employers who rebuke them but at times land up participating in the world of children. A few children expressed their ideas of leisure thus :

- o "I like cycling and seeing movies on holidays."
- o "I have a big family so I hardly go to see movies. Sometimes, I spend a rupee or two to watch video-movies nearby."
- o "On holidays, I spend the whole day cycling."

Entry into the labour force at a very early age (many times at the age of 6 or 8) does not permit majority of children to have formal schooling. The so called law abiding and law creating society may feel that street children are deprived of education and miss schooling but, the fact is that these children do not view education to be indispensable for a fruitful life. Often this view of the role of education in their lives is dictated by widespread deprivation, unemployment and other structural factors prevalent in their social strata. At times, it was found that a few did hold education to be important and yet mean-

ingless to their personal world of reality. Interaction with them revealed their views in the following words/statements :

- o "What will I do after schooling ? I have to work even then. I will unnecessarily waste my time in studies."
- o "I always wanted to go to school but I never got the opportunity. Had I been educated, where was the need to do such low level work ?"
- o "Instead of going to school I would like to work, as it not only provides me money but also gives me an opportunity to play when work is over."

Though there is no explicit acceptance of indulgence in gambling, yet it is almost clear that all games involves exchange of money. This is necessary to maintain a high level of optimism despite hardship. The same is evident in the purchase of lottery tickets with the expectation that a wind fall would change their lives. Most of the children, in all the three social contexts, were interested in seeing movies and eating delicacies (many times non-veg). They stated :

- o "I want to earn more and more so that I can have enough food and some money for movies."
- o "I like non-vegetarian food. When I earn more, I take chicken or fish."

- o "My only worry is about earning enough for food."
- o "At home I did not have much to eat, but here at least I take what I like. Here (on street) I am able to have two meals a day and some times even more."

Children in all three social contexts are aware of main festivals. Festivals mean spending more time on leisure activities, enjoyment, sleeping less and participating in the festivities of others. Children at Transport Nagar get sweet, meat and other delicacies. However, those at the Railway Station do not.

DISCUSSION AND MAJOR INTERPRETATIONS :

Society generally perceives and treats Street-Children negatively. This is so because adult middle class society nurtures different notions of street, home, productive labour and even childhood. The findings show high level of incongruence in the construction of meanings. Children interpret and perceive the reality differently. A few such notions that play important role in the life of a Street-Child are discussed and major interpretations may be summarised as follows :

1. Notion of Home:

For the middle class society, the home symbolizes not merely a built space which is distinct from the street but also a place where members share some amount of intimate, affectionate relationships, a sense of security arising from common belonging under a same roof, and a regular patterned activity of daily life which leads to different forms of need fulfilment. But, Street-Children, who belong to a different economic background, do not share the same notion of home. If street is the extension of home, (cf. p.77) then the converse is also true. The home is an extension of street in the sense that it shares with

street-life all the characteristics which demonise the street for law making society -- violence, abuse, deprivation, irregular timing of daily activities of the members, etc. During field work, the researcher found that Street-Children do not have the same concept of home as an average child. For instance, a child reported that :

- o "I am happy on the street as I am getting enough money for myself. I am well-off here. I am able to get two meals in a day and sometimes I even enjoy special dishes (non-vegetarian). What is there in the home where I had to starve ?"

Others rejected any associational feeling for home as it is a place where :

- o "Physical abuse, quarrels and starvation are the only facts of life. Now we are enjoying life with whatever little we have."

.2 Notion of Work :

Child labour is considered negatively by policymakers. India has stood for constitutional statutory and developmental measures that are required to eliminate

Children also have negative notions of work as involving exploitative situations. Many complain of fatigue (cf. p.99) . To overcome this strain children enjoy a few moments of leisure and fun during work. In fact, the researcher found work and leisure mingling well in the lives of children. (cf. pp. 100-101)

The adult society wants to abolish child labour because it deprives the child of precious years of schooling.⁷ Work deprives children from education and creativity. However, children themselves do not nurture any such feelings of deprivation. In fact, their biographical context does not permit a good opinion of what education means in life. Previous experience in schools is also not very encouraging. Long hours in schooling is, infact, considered an impediment to skill acquisition and self-actualization. For instance, a child reported :

- o Even if some one pays for my studies, I will not go to school. I want to work and earn money. That is more meaningful."

2.3 Notion of child :

Legal definitions define street children by taking into consideration biological and physical factors. The Uttar Pradesh Children Act, 1951 (Section 3, p.4) states:

"Child" means a person under the age of sixteen years.

The Act further says that in the context in which the word (child) has been used it means "by appearance". A police officer is authorized to take action under the Act, if a child "by appearance" is below sixteen years of age. It is not necessary to investigate the age of the child.

A review of the workings of the existing Acts related to children indicate that greater attention is given to children who may be found in situations of social maladjustment, delinquency or neglect. Therefore, a uniform Juvenile Justice system alongwith an Act to provide care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent juveniles was formulated. For the purpose of adjudication of certain matters relating to, and disposition of cases related to delinquent Juveniles, an act was formulated and called "The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986."

The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986, gives the defini-

tion for the term "Juvenile" with an extension of the definition of the term 'child' by the Uttar Pradesh Children' Act, 1951. The Act, 1986 says : (Section 2, pp. 3-4)

"Juvenile" means a boy who has not attained the age of sixteen years or a girl who has not attained the age of eighteen years;

The Act further divides the term Juvenile into two categories:

- (a) "delinquent Juvenile" means a Juvenile who has been found to have committed an offence;
- (b) "neglected Juvenile" means a Juvenile who-
 - (i) is found begging ; or
 - (ii) is found without having any home or settled place of abode and without any ostensible means of subsistence and is destitute;
 - (iii) has a parent or guardian who is unfit or incapacitated to exercise control over the juvenile ; or
 - (iv) lives in a brothel or with a prostitute or frequently goes to any place used for the purpose of prostitution, or is found to associate with any prostitute or any other person who leads an immoral, drunken or deprived life;
 - (v) who is being or is likely to be abused or exploited for immoral or illegal purposes or unconscionable gain;

Needless to say, all these definitions overlook cultural and social determinants in defining a child and childhood. International legislative measures and international aid agencies also work with a global model of child-

hood which negate these variations.

In defining the notion of childhood, children are considered very different from adults--physically, intellectually and emotionally. Chronological factor is considered to play an important role in their assumed vulnerability. Children are considered as having traits like innocence, they lack intellectual maturity and are assumed to be helpless and in need of adult care.

Because of this notion of childhood, child labour is considered in a negative light. However, this is a very recent phenomenon. Historically this idea did not prevail. Prior to and during the first phase of industrialization in Europe, labour was considered an effective means of child learning and socialization and was actively promoted, especially among the children of the poor. Child labour was even used as a cure for childhood problems. Jo Boyden (1996) points out that what children are 'capable of' depends on the culture in which they live. The Third World Countries' reliance on a model of childhood based on children in First World Countries ignores the strengths and experiences of working and street children. It leads to an attitude of pity, which is reflected in projects that try to rescue children from work and street without thinking of consequences for the children and their families.⁸ Poor families need their help and children may need to work for their families and for their own survival (cf pp. 87-88,

104). Manytimes, adult members of poor neighbourhoods experience considerable unemployment or under-employment. In the face of continuous threat of starvation, they themselves encourage children to seek work. Alternatively, when adult members of both sexes are engaged in the labour market, children manage the entire scene at home. This involves engagement in such domestic activities as cooking, cleaning and the care of the siblings. Considering all this, no special advantage accrues to such a society by unnecessarily prolonging the stage of dependence -- childhood. The child learns very early to be adult-like. During field work, the researcher found that despite their tender age, there is no sign of childhood in terms of vulnerability, innocence, etc. Children themselves do not miss their childhood which is considered important by the rest of the society. They accept the facts of life and for all practical purposes live and act like adults. A few even stated :

- o "Education and toys are for rich kids. For us there is no leisure-time or enjoyment."

They also exude unlimited confidence :

- o "Do not consider or treat us as children. We know 'everything' and we can even guide adult members of society."

In fact during the study, the linguistic structure, body gestures and mental make-up of the children, provided a close resemblance to those of the adults, raising doubt in the mind of the researcher whether any special advantage accrues by considering childhood as a distinctive category.

Street-Children, like adult members, display social responsibility and a sense of commitment. For instance, during interaction a few children expressed a strong sense of social responsibility. One child stated:

- o "I want to become a doctor so that I can treat children who are unfortunate like me."
- o Another child expressed his concern over fulfillment as of basic needs of his family members as "I am the only bread earner at home."

Child 'X' almost played the role of an adult while expressing the sentiment that :

- o "I have to earn money for the marriage of my sister."

Child 'Y' stated:

- o "I have to repay a loan taken by my father to retrieve my land."

4 Notion of Street

The way one looks at Street-Children depends on the connotations which are linked to the "Street-space". For the law making society, the street is merely a channel through which people and goods are in transit. Symbolically, people who live on street represent forces of disorganization and social irresponsibility. The street is especially considered to be an obstacle for the moral constitution of the child.⁹

Spatially, the limit of the street are well defined, precise and separate from other build spaces. Legal definitions of street children typically portray this limited vision. For instance. The Uttar Pradesh Children Act, 1951 defines the term STREET as follows:

"Street" includes any highway, and any public bridge, road, lane, footpath, square, court, alley or passage, whether a thoroughfare or not. (Section 3, p.4)

Such definitions fail to appreciate that people who live on the street do not share the same symbolism. For the street-child, the street cannot be demonised; it is a place of exchange, production and social market. The street space belongs to his daily reality. In fact, for a street-child who has left the family, the spatial definitions of street are multiple. Whether he is on the Railway

Station, or working in a dhaba, or sleeping in the Transporter's workshop, he is on the street which is a space alternative to family. For a child who is seeking an alternative form of socialization, the street is not fully alien and hostile. Infact, the Street-Children in the study seemed quite comfortable in their set-up. The 'anonymous' people on the street were at times sympathetic to them and could even be called upon to arbitrate in group violence. However, the study shows that the mental concept of the street also varies with the duration of stay (adaptation), age, and other personal factors.

During fieldwork, it appeared to the researcher that the social class/strata to which Street-Children belong, often views the street as an extension of domestic space. For instance, "This street is our home," "Street is home to us" were among the few statements made by the children during interaction. In both villages and congested urban set ups, this may be true. Children who grow up in an environment which does not demonise the street, naturally adapt to it with considerable ease.

According to police estimates, very few children are able to accept the "trauma" of street life on entering the Railway Station (cf. p.76) However, this does not fully imply the return of the child back to home. It is possible that such children would find another 'street' more

congenial to adapt to than the existing one. It is difficult to interpret the phenomenon as 'return of a child to his home and family'.

6.2.5 Notion of Street-Child

(a) Departure

In most studies, the Street-Child is considered to be a passive being who suffers the constraints of his social and material environment. The child's departure from home is considered to be a result of deviance. This leads to a schematic reduction of the complexity of the "socio-psychological phenomenon associated with the child's, departure."¹⁰ There are various limits of the social phenomenon "departure of child from home in the street'. There is a growing number of children who live on the street with their families. Some belong to the second or even third generation. Are they Street-Children? This is a difficult question to answer in India. Again, there are a large number of families who live below the poverty line. Children are born and they die on the street and lead a life of extreme deprivation. The notion of departure is also muddled up by "the definitions of deviance which are proposed by official agencies of social reaction and by mass media that standardized the mental representations of social reaction and by images borrowed from the outside."¹¹

The departure is never depicted as a result of personal choice or the normal product of a specific sub-culture. The findings show that some children compelled by poverty feel an urgent need to escape from the constraints of the adult world. But despite their presence in the street they are not emotionally detached from their family. That is why there are evidences of psychological association despite social and economic isolation from the family (cf. pp. 111-112). Therefore, departure is always partial and never full/complete (in most of the cases). Interaction with these children also portray the same picture (cf. pp. 108-109).

(b) Identity

In general, the term Street-Children does not carry a positive notion. A society which demonises the street also attaches a 'label' to the children on the street. People do not rely and have faith on them. They are considered as social nuisance, delinquents and an eyesore to the landscape. Thus, adults stigmatize them in their own way. Some children object to being called "Street children" because of these negative connotations ; others accept the societal image and act upto it. Their self-identity is slowly carved out of the images 'Others' have of them and constitute an impediment to harmonious personality development. Children also observe and compare

their conditions, with other children of the affluent society, in all its dimensions--physical, social, cultural and economic. This, very often creates a feeling of helplessness, loneliness, etc.

During field work, the researcher found, that the presence of a large number of welfare institutions (Juvenile Homes, Observation Homes, Special Homes and After-care Institutions)¹² in fact, makes the children conscious of their own status as a 'special category' (in need of correctional measures) vis-a-vis other children of their age group. This results in negative self-perception. Since the child's self-concept is largely a reflection of the way 'Others' react to him, it becomes apparent that rejection fosters a distorted and devalued self-concept.

Information about the presence of welfare institutions does not come directly to a new entrant on the street. It is conveyed by adult members of the society, specially agents of social control (GRP and civil police). Their 'focused' and 'unfocused' interaction patterns (cf. pp. 80-81) continuously remind these children about their marginalised status. In fact, one may even ask why all Street-Children are from low socio-economic strata ? Perhaps because their common biographical content predispose them to a similar family situation of deprivation and abuse. They do not carry negative view of life on street (cf. pp. 103, 111-113). However, police intervention is extremely

strong in their lives because of these very conditions. Manytimes they are considered delinquents. This image of delinquency, involves a series of interactions based on sets of 'meanings' held by the police. This process of defining an individual as delinquent is a multistage process, in which meanings are negotiated. The first stage is the stage of decision by the police to stop and interrogate a child. This decision is based on meanings held by the police/agents of social control of what is "unusual" or 'suspicious'. Such meanings are related to particular life situations. Infact, children's low economic status itself conjure up an image of vagrancy to the police. When 'caught' by the police, a series of interrogation starts, which may or may not lead to arrest. This process of interrogation largely depends on the picture held by the police. If the appearance, language and demeanour of the child fits this picture, he is more likely to be arrested¹³ and confined in the OH. In the OH, authorities also 'negotiate' the same image. But, in the case of affluent child offenders, authorities at the OH were found to engage in a more serious interrogation session. Invariably their address is located and the offending child is returned to the safe custody of the guardians without being labeled as a 'Street-Child'. Often vagrancy of an affluent child who is found on the street is kept a secret, which brings its own reward to the authorities. It may also be mentioned here that in case of an affluent child the discrepancy between the life on

street and that of the home is so wide that the child is often himself unable to bear the traumatic experience of being on the street. He therefore, goes back home, whether aided by the police or not. In the case of children of lower income strata, no such trauma is faced. The dialectic between home and street life if any, is resolved very fast because of familiar life-situations at both the places.

6.2.6 Notion of Institution

India has been following a proactive policy for rehabilitation of children since a long time. However, what should by virtue of promoting their welfare, create a positive image in the minds of the children, by contrast, has a negative reaction. During field work, two points suggested to the researcher that Street-Children do not have good image of institutions meant for their rehabilitation.

(i) The initial problem the researcher faced in data collection revealed that children considered researcher as belonging to a government agency. They expressed reluctance to part with any information. Their views were expressed in the following words:

o "Are you from the Juvenile Jail? We will not give you any information. Otherwise, you will transfer it to

the Jail authorities and they would confine us there."

An interesting situation was created when some older children entered the scene and they stopped the younger ones from speaking further. In their view, the young kids were vulnerable and might provide information that may prove fatal for all of them. They infact, reversed the process of interrogation and said:

o "Don't ask anything from these children." Then, they turned to the children and scoldingly said, "stop talking and let us know the matter. You may give some information that may be used against you in future."

(ii) The secondary data shows frequent cases of children running away from OH in the absence of required care and protection.^{14,15,16} This, despite the fact that large claims are made by the government that an environment of warmth, care and protection is provided to children through rehabilitation centers, including, Observation Homes.^{17,18} Although the OH at Kidwai Nagar is a government organization, the researcher was not granted permission to enter it on grounds of security measures.¹⁹ The question is : why should such secrecy exist? Why should these children have a negative image of the rehabilitation agency ?

Discussing the incidence of "raid", it was found that children developed a negative and often fearful idea of rehabilitation center (OH). This was partly due to the fact that police officials, by parting information about the date and time of "raid", conveyed an impression to the children that they were being 'saved' from an impending disaster. Thus, they were successful in creating a negative image of these institutions which is further transferred to other new entrants to the street-life.²⁰

6.2.7 The Role of Institutions in the Creation of Street-Child Identity

The researcher found the OH to be a very crucial factor in the creation of Street-Child identity. The study of OH provides an interesting example of the role of adult stigmatization in the formation of Street-Child identity.

The OH through a series of interactive processes, unintentionally 'mortifies' the child's self-concept. This begins with the removal of various support systems which helped to maintain the child's former self-concept like his possessions--his clothes and other articles on his person. Important symbols of his identity are removed and he is given a new "identity kit" in the form of clothes (usually

uniform of the Home) and other articles. Such standardised items tend to remove the individuality of the child and become a set of links in a long chain of interactions which confirm the child's identity as a Street-Child in need of special care.

The prolonged interview session with the Probation Officer is also unnerving to many children whose stay in the street has been short and who have no previous experience of institutionalization. The degree of "resilience" that the child adopts during the interview is displayed by whether the child parts with his biographical history or not. The biographical details are then picked-up to intimate family members or other responsible adults about the child's whereabouts. The child's career on the street abruptly ends when these adults come to claim him. However, there are many parents who admit that the child has become a "habitual" deserter of the family, and their efforts do not help them to keep the child at home.

In those cases where none turn up to reclaim the child, he is confined for a maximum period of 90 days or given a warning and released. The nature of option that is thrust upon the child and which becomes a determining force in shaping the child's future identity, is a matter of mere chance governed by considerations other than the child himself. These include the scarcity of finances at the OH,

the extent of over-crowding at that particular time, etc.

At the OH, the child often experiences a more ordered network of other children who are in the street. He encounters the full diversity of personal and individual 'careers' of others who live in the street. The exchange of images, sharing of ideas, workout of future strategies to evade the police-raids which brought them to OH--all these and more, are discussed during their stay. Such communication provides a very congenial opportunity to a 'new entrant' to get socialized into the street-culture. Once a child is put into such a group or setting, he is more likely than before to see himself as a Street-Child and to act in terms of the altered self-image. Finally, he becomes member of the 'situated activity of the Street-Child'. Thus, the whole process--starting from public identification of the Street-Child by the agents of social control to his temporary suspension in OH--becomes a part of an interaction process, which systematically and often unintentionally "mortifies" an individual's self-concept.

The child often leaves the OH to rationalize, and justify his departure from his family. For those children who have already been confined to the OH earlier, the present confinement is merely one of a set of alternating events between the Street and the Institution. It carries no special meaning, no special importance to the child except for the fact that his freedom is curbed temporarily.

He has to suffer the constraints of the adult world from which he is trying to escape. His confinement in the OH also sharpens the strategies that he would adopt during police "raid" to avoid possible detention in future.

The OH also provides a setting for perfecting some skills the child has learnt in the street. (cf. p. 94) It imposes a training model which, paradoxically enough, would categorize him as a delinquent when found on the street or as a child labour. Thus, OH plays important role in the evolution of the 'moral career' of a Street-Child.

In the diagram below an attempt has been made by the researcher to show how the individual and collective identity of the Street-Child is confirmed in the OH. Children who are caught in the "raid" at the Railway Station (social context-1) are sent to Observation Home. During the 'raid', although the Railway Station houses all categories of children (from new entrant to an experienced Street-Child), very often the new entrant (who is inexperienced) gets caught and is confined to the OH. Here a series of "mortification" processes alter the identity of the child. This, coupled with the structural problems e.g., inefficient, functioning of staff and scarcity of recreational and training facilities) in the OH provide an opportunity for intense interactive and communicative processes between the relatively 'new entrants' and other more

experienced Street-Children who have been accidentally caught. All these factors--structural problems, interactive and communicative processes and mortification processes combine to confirm the progression of identity of the Street-Child. From the OH some children (whose parents reclaim them) go back to their home while others who are not reclaimed find themselves again in the Railway Station or in the Street, in the larger context. Many times, the experience of confinement in the Observation Home itself makes the child ill-adapted to face the situation at home.

FORMATION OF COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

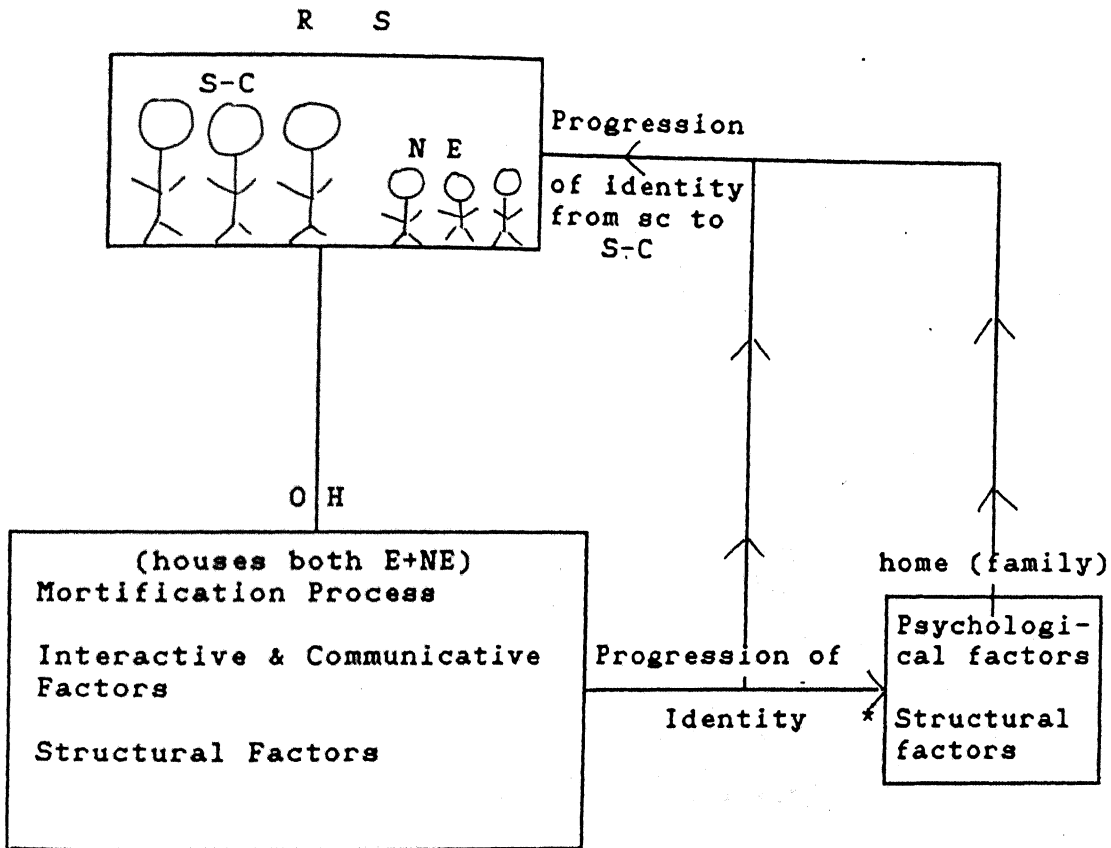


Fig. 2: Formation of Collective and Individual Identity

Abbreviations :

S-C : experienced Street-Child

sc or NE : new entrant to the life on the street

E : experienced child.

RS : Railway Station

OH : Observation Home

* Structural factors : include family poverty, unemployment, etc.

Notes and References

1. Psychologically, this stage is considered to be a stage of stress and strain which explains the adjustment problems in their personality which forces them to run away from the house.
2. "Raid" is periodically conducted by the GRP, police and district administration to save and protect railway property.
3. Each and every child is assigned some duty at the residence of GRP personnel e.g., to bring milk, vegetables or do some other petty jobs or clean thana at the station. These children have to perform these duties without fail. Thus, GRP creates a situation of "crime-power-nexus".
4. Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 defines Observation Home in Section 2, p.4 as follows :

"Observation Home" means any institution or place established or recognised by the State Government under Section 11. Section 11, reads as follows :

- (a) The State Government may establish and maintain as many observation homes as may be necessary for the temporary reception of juveniles during the pendency of any inquiry regarding them under this Act.
- (b) Where the state Government is of opinion that any institution other than a home established or maintained under sub-section :
 - (a) is fit for the temporary reception of Juveniles during the pendency of any inquiry regarding them under this Act,
 - (b) it may recognise such institution as an observation home for the purposes of this Act.
 - (c) every observation home to which a juvenile with accommodation, maintenance and facilities for medical examination and treatment, but also provide him with facilities for useful occupation.
 - (d) The State Government may, by rules made under this Act, provide for the management of observation homes, including the standards and the nature of services to be maintained by them, and the circumstances under which, and the manner in which, an institution may be recognised as an observation home or the recognition may be withdrawn.

5. Those children who are engaged in technical work get coupons from the transporters. Coupons are of value of Rs. 1/2. Children take these and get it converted to money. Thus, they have some additional income which often spent on personal use or seeing movies. Therefore, children enjoy themselves despite meagre wages.
6. This despite the fact that the Directive Principles of the State Policy lays down that the State shall provide free and compulsory elementary education to all children till they complete the age of fourteen.
7. Also acknowledged by Rizwanul Islam. OIC, ILO, New Delhi and Director ILO-SAAT, in his inaugural address at Ahmedabad Workshop on "Child Labour" (A Report of Workshops for district Collectors and Project Directors, V.V. girl National labour Institute Noida, June 1986, p.97).
8. Boyden, Jo. Social and Cultural Meanings of Childhood. Development, 1996:1, pp. 18-22.
9. Lucchini, Riccardo. Street-Children : A Complex Reality. A Working Paper. Institute of Economic and Social Science, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, 1993, p.11.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. The term 'Home' is attached to all such rehabilitation centers. Earlier these Homes were being run by Social Welfare Department of the State Government. However, after receiving complaints of various kinds including child abuse, they were transferred to the Women and Child Development Department on December 19, 1994, and the government directed all the Commissioners and District Magistrates to make regular inspections of Government Homes in their respective districts (The Pioneer, Lucknow, Feb. 6, 1995).
13. A similar idea is found in Haralambos, M. Sociology. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, pp. 434-435.
14. 14 delinquents escaped from a government run Observation Home for boys at Delhi, under dramatic circumstances (The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Feb. 24, 1994).
15. Eight Juveniles (between the age group of 11-17) escaped from a Government Observation Home, Lucknow due to abuse and torture (Dainik Jagran, Kanpur, April 14, 1997).

16. Nearly a dozen children escaped from Children's Home at Ferozshah Kotla, Delhi. Reports indicate that they were beaten mercilessly (Homes for Harassment The Week, Jan 26, 97).
17. Ref.A Despite tall claims there are frequent reports of torture, harassment and abuse. For instance, during a routine inspection of the Home (Rajkiya Samprekshan Griha, Kanpur) in Jan., 1995, eight inmates complained of sexual harassment to a team of officials of Women and Child Development Department. The inquiry officer has confirmed existence of heinous crime within the premises and government ordered the suspension of employees found guilty (The Pioneer, Lucknow, Feb. 6, 1995) ; Ref.B The same story of abuse and harassment by staff members of "mini prisons" called Homes is confirmed in other sources of print media. (Homes for Harassment, The Week, Jan. 26, 1997, p.37) ; Ref.C See also "Time for clean up" (The Week, Feb. 23, 1997, pp. 53-54) ; Ref.D For further details see the special Independence day issue on "Indian Culture" of the Illustrated Weekly of India, Aug. 13-19, 1989.
18. Similar experience has been reported by journalists/social workers (The Week, Jan 26, 1997, p.37).
19. In order to give shape to the directions of the Supreme Court order of 1996, the states concerned were required to do a survey of all kinds of child labour within six months (The Indian Express, Dec. 10, 1996) and ("Trauma Persists" by Dayal and Mukerjee in Rashtriya Sahara, March 1997, p. 19).

In compliance with Supreme Court's order, a survey was conducted in Kanpur. According to an estimation there are 5,000 working children in Kanpur but only 50 child labours were caught on 8th April. Only 19 child labours were caught in 201 "raids" conducted on 10.04.97. And on 11.04.97, only 48 child workers were caught in raids. This clearly indicates that children were removed from their work places i.e., were either send back to their homes or nearby places by the employers. What will be the effect of such a sweeping attempt can be understood by a UNICEF study in Bangladesh, which clearly show that children thrown out of export-oriented industries do not automatically go to schools or playgrounds ; they find themselves in far more unacceptable situations. Such actions are in general counter productive (Inaugural address of Rizwannul Islam, Director ILO-SAAT in the Workshop on Child Labour, A Report of Workshops for District Collectors and Project Directors, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, 1996, p. 98).

20. Corruption and unethical practices of the staff members further erode the confidence of the children in these institutions at Kishore Griha, Kanpur. The Superintendent here has been suspended for not supplying items meant for inmates, despite the fact that items were available in abundance at the Home. In another case, the Superintendent of a Centre at Lucknow has been suspended as the items meant for distribution to the inmates were found missing from the store.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1989 United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have seen a single consistent conception of childhood and of a child. Rooted in western ideology, it upholds the commonsense view of a child as an individual who is not yet mature -- physically, intellectually and psychologically to have outgrown the need for adult guidance and dependence.¹ Childhood is conceived as a distinct period of innocence and vulnerability and children are considered to be the responsibility of their family (cf. Article 7 p.7). This relationship of dependence in western society is governed by a large number of factors, chief among which is the demographic factor involving the shrinking size of population in the younger age group. The western view point has been perpetuated in international events and has further strengthened notions of universalization and democratization of children. This assumes that all children can be exposed to the same treatment and in principle, be given the same opportunities for development through new forms of institutionalisation and other organized activities like schools, music lessons, games, etc. Institutionalization therefore, is a measure of adult society's concern for child welfare and protective feeling.²

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The western ideology has governed attitudes towards children living in the street, also. These children are depicted as being in urgent need of institutional care, education, organised activities and reorientation in time and space. Street-children need to be pulled from street to home, and time spent in work is to be diverted to activities of a more useful nature, eg. schooling, games, etc.

Needless to say, such a perspective fails to appreciate the fact that the dynamics of childhood varies historically and culturally due to economic, political and socio-cultural factors. It has been seen in the present study that the notion of childhood in disadvantaged societies is different. Children in the study come from poor families where poverty has determined the features of childhood in a different way. Here children do not feel bad about living in the street or working in the street. Neither do they miss schooling and organized activities. Obviously, we are imputing our own middle-class values to create a 'missed reality' when none exists.

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The study also shows that although we speak of children's rights, we do not make an attempt to understand them in their own right. Welfare measures are governed by our obsession with children's success as future adults. The study has shown that we are not looking at Street-Children from the perspective of the Street-Child. If this were so,

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then probably rehabilitation measures like Observation Homes would have not been conceived. These institutions are not conducive to the spontaneity and impulsiveness of children under consideration. Many of the children in the study exhibit a strong propensity to lead a life of an adult, they exhibit strong tendency for independent living. Given their personality disposition, it would be unfair to subject them to a process of institutional control. Even returning the child to the care of family does not restore the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the child. The child may be at a greater risk from his own family members.

The entire process of institutionalization confirms what critics term as 'domestication' of childhood.³ By contrast children in the study have been found to make independent decisions about life and society. They become deprived of these opportunities when put under 'care' of adult members. It may be mentioned that poor families (to which these children belong) often encourage a high degree of independence. They do not find any rationale in unnecessarily lengthening the 'childhood' of their offsprings. Childhood does not assume a privileged status compared with other age groups. The notion of Street-Child is also alien to both the child and adult members of the underprivileged group. It is a 'label' which is imposed by 'Others'.

An important aspect of Street-Child reality is

their engagement in productive work which results in their being labeled as child labour. This is an offensive notion to the adult middle class society. But to deny the child the right to work by labeling him as child labour is to ignore the dynamics of childhood in underprivileged groups where parents do encourage children to work both at home and outside, from an early age. The study shows that children have a positive image of what they are doing. They exude a high level of confidence. Probably, what is needed is to not to withdraw them from labour force but to keep them absorbed in productive work that simultaneously helps to meet their twin aspirations for wages and skill development. A large number of child labour laws and penal measures against child labour may, in fact, do a great harm to many children who are forced by circumstances to fend for themselves, as in the case of children at Transport Nagar.

In keeping with the United Nation Convention's notion of children's right we must enable a process of social embeddedness which would make it possible for Street-Children to grow up with self-respect. The satisfactory understanding of rights truly begins with recognizing the child's own needs, wants, aspirations -- the 'actor's' own viewpoint. More and more forums are needed which can enable children to participate in the dialogues which frame their lives, the way they want to.

Notes and References

1. Boyden, Jo. Social and Cultural Meanings of Childhood
Development 1996:1, p. 18.
2. Ovortrup, Jens. Childhood in a Post-industrial World,
Development 1996:1, p.65.
3. *ibid.*

Appendix 1

CHILD POPULATION : EDUCATION AND ESTIMATES OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA 1961-1991Child Population and Workers (Actual Nos.)

| (1) | 1961 (2) | 1971 (3) | 1981 (4) | 1991 (5) |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Child Population - 0 -14 | 180082782 | 230394772 | 263107053 | 296936090 |
| (i) 0 -4 | 66102638 | 79556563 | 83509808 | 93635978 |
| (ii) 5 -9 | 64673959 | 82004502 | 93685877 | 103484115 |
| (iii) 10-14 | 49306185 | 68833707 | 85911368 | 99815997 |
| (iv) 5 -14 | 113980144 | 150778259 | 179597245 | 203300112 |
| 2. Full Time Students | | | | |
| (v) 5 -14 Yrs (Census data) | 34595761 | 50692063 | 78860388 | 92970793 |
| (vi) 5 -14 Yrs (MHRD data) | 59079209 | 70350000 | 86078505 | 131795054 |
| 3. Full Time Child Workers | | | | |
| (vii) Census data based estimates (0-14 year) | 14469775 | 10664018 | 11195544 | 12669909 |
| (viii) NSS data based estimates (5-14 year) | 13777443 | 16330000 | 16166330 | 13950225 |
| 4. Non-workers & Non-Students (5-14 yrs.) | | | | |
| (i) Census data based estimates | 64914609 | 89482123 | 89541313 | 97659410 |
| (ii) MHRD & NSS data based estimates | 41123492 | 64092259 | 77352410 | 57554833 |
| 5. Child Marginal Workers | | | | |
| Census Estimates, 1981 & 1991 | NA | NA | 2445329 | 10498822 |
| 6. Estimates of Total Child Workers | | | | |
| (i) Census data based estimates | 14469775 | 10753985 | 13640873 | 23161013 |
| (ii) NSS Data based estimates | 13299910 | 16330000 | 18611659 | 24449047 |

Appendix 2

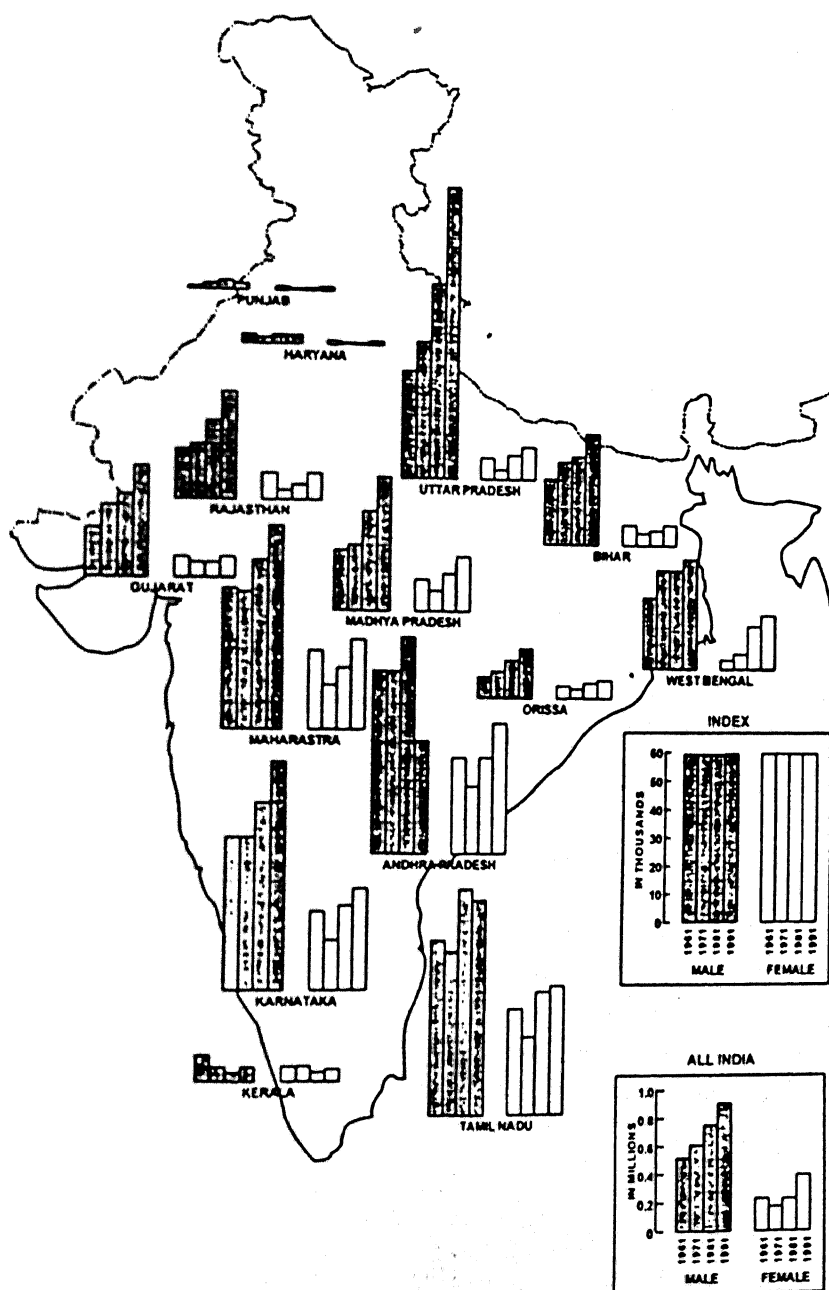
DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT STATES OF INDIA

| Sl. No. | State | No. of working children | | | | Percentage of working children | |
|---------|----------------|-------------------------|--------|----------|------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| | | Rural | Urban | Total | Population | Workers | Children |
| 1. | Andhra Pradesh | 1810448 | 140864 | 1951312 | 3.28 | 7.75 | 8.50 |
| 2. | Bihar | 1053645 | 48119 | 1101764 | 1.28 | 4.31 | 3.07 |
| 3. | Gujarat | 567359 | 49554 | 616913 | 1.36 | 4.31 | 3.07 |
| 4. | Karnataka | 1007125 | 124405 | 1131530 | 2.60 | 7.08 | 6.58 |
| 5. | Madhya Pradesh | 1631129 | 67468 | 1698597 | 0.63 | 6.85 | 6.38 |
| 6. | Maharashtra | 1447674 | 110082 | 1557756 | 2.01 | 5.20 | 5.25 |
| 7. | Orissa | 672213 | 30080 | 702293 | 1.95 | 5.97 | 4.93 |
| 8. | Rajasthan | 775475 | 44130 | 819605 | 1.72 | 5.97 | 4.06 |
| 9. | Tamil Nadu | 823251 | 151804 | 975035 | 1.80 | 4.58 | 5.11 |
| 10. | Uttar Pradesh | 1308034 | 126641 | 1434675 | 1.14 | 3.90 | 2.74 |
| 11. | West Bengal | 531421 | 73842 | 605263 | 0.96 | 3.39 | 2.47 |
| 1. | All India | 12649869 | 991003 | 13640872 | 1.68 | 5.03 | 4.26 |

Source : Census of India, 1981

Appendix 3

FULL TIME URBAN CHILD WORKERS IN MAJOR STATES OF INDIA 1961-1991 (By Sex 0-14 years Age Group)



Source : Adapted from Chaudhari, D.P. (1995) Dynamic Profile of Child Labour in India 1961-91, p. xviii.

Appendix 4

ESTIMATES OF STREET CHILDREN

| City | Investigator's Estimates of the population of Street Children |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Calcutta | 75-100,000 |
| 2. Bombay | Not available |
| 3. Madras | 25,000 |
| 4. Delhi | 100,000 |
| 5. Bangalore | 45,000 |
| 6. Indore | Not available |
| 7. Hyderabad | 30,000 |
| 8. Kanpur | 5,000 |
| 9. Poona | 12,589 |
| 10. Vijayawada | 1400-1600 |

Source : Adapted from India's Street Children, Summary of Ten Situational Studies and Responses to the Problem. Draft Report, Prepared by A.K. Srivastava, p.45.

Appendix 5

INDIA'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS CHILDREN : A FEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Article 15 ...not discriminate against any citizen ... (3) nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 21 ...no persons shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty

Article 23 Traffic in human beings and begar* and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and...

Article 24 No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work ... in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39 ...the tender age of children are not abused and that ... to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strenght.

Article 42 ...for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief..

Article 45 ...free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 47 ...raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people.

Source : Twenty years of ICDS Department of Women and Child Welfare, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 1996. p.32.

* begar means labour without payment

Appendix 6

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN - PROTECTIVE LEGAL PROVISIONS

| Sl. No. | Name of Enactment | Protective provisions for children |
|---------|--|--|
| 1. | The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933. | |
| 2. | The Beedi & Cigar Workers (Condition of Employment) Act., 1948 | |
| 3. | The Factories Act, 1948. | |
| 4. | The Mines Act, 1952. | |
| 5. | The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961. | |
| 6. | The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 | <p>Except in the process of family-based work or recognised school-based activities, children not permitted to work in occupations connected with -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Passengers, goods mail transport by Railway.* Carpet weaving* Cinder picking, cleaning of ash pits.* Cement manufacturing.* Building operations, construction* Cloth printing.* Dyeing, weaving* Manufacturing of matches, explosives, fireworks.* Catering establishments in Railway premises of port limits.* Beedi making* Mica cutting, splitting* Abattoirs* "Hazardous Process" and "Dangerous Operation" as defined notified in Section 2(eb) & Section 87 of the Factories Act. 1948 respectively. |

- * Wool cleaning
- * Printing as defined in section 2(k) of the Factories Act. 1948.
- * Cashew and cashewnut descaling and processing.
- * Soldering processes in electronic industries.

In occupations and processes other than the above mentioned, work by children is permissible only for six hours between 8.00 A.M. and 7.00 P.M. with one day's weekly rest.

Occupier of establishment employing children to give notice to local inspector and maintain prescribed register.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 7. | The Plantation Labour Act., 1951. | Children/adolescents are allowed to work 27 hours a week. |
| 8. | Minimum Wages Act, 1948 | Child work is not allowed during night i.e., 7 P.M. to 6 A.M. Children permitted to work in plantation only where certificate of fitness is granted by a certifying surgeon. On completion of 15 days work, one day's leave with wages is to be allowed. |

Source : Annual Report 1995-96, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, New Delhi. p.88.

Appendix 7

NATIONAL POLICIES FOR CHILDREN

- * National Policy for Children, 1974
- * National Health Policy, 1983
- * National Policy on Education, 1986
- * National Policy on Child Labour, 1987
- * National Nutrition Policy, 1993

In addition to these policies, Government of India is implementing more than 120 schemes and programmes for welfare and development of children and women.